THE JOURNAL OF FRANKENSTEIN™

VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN, IV
Editor

Representing the World of Imagination and the Macabre



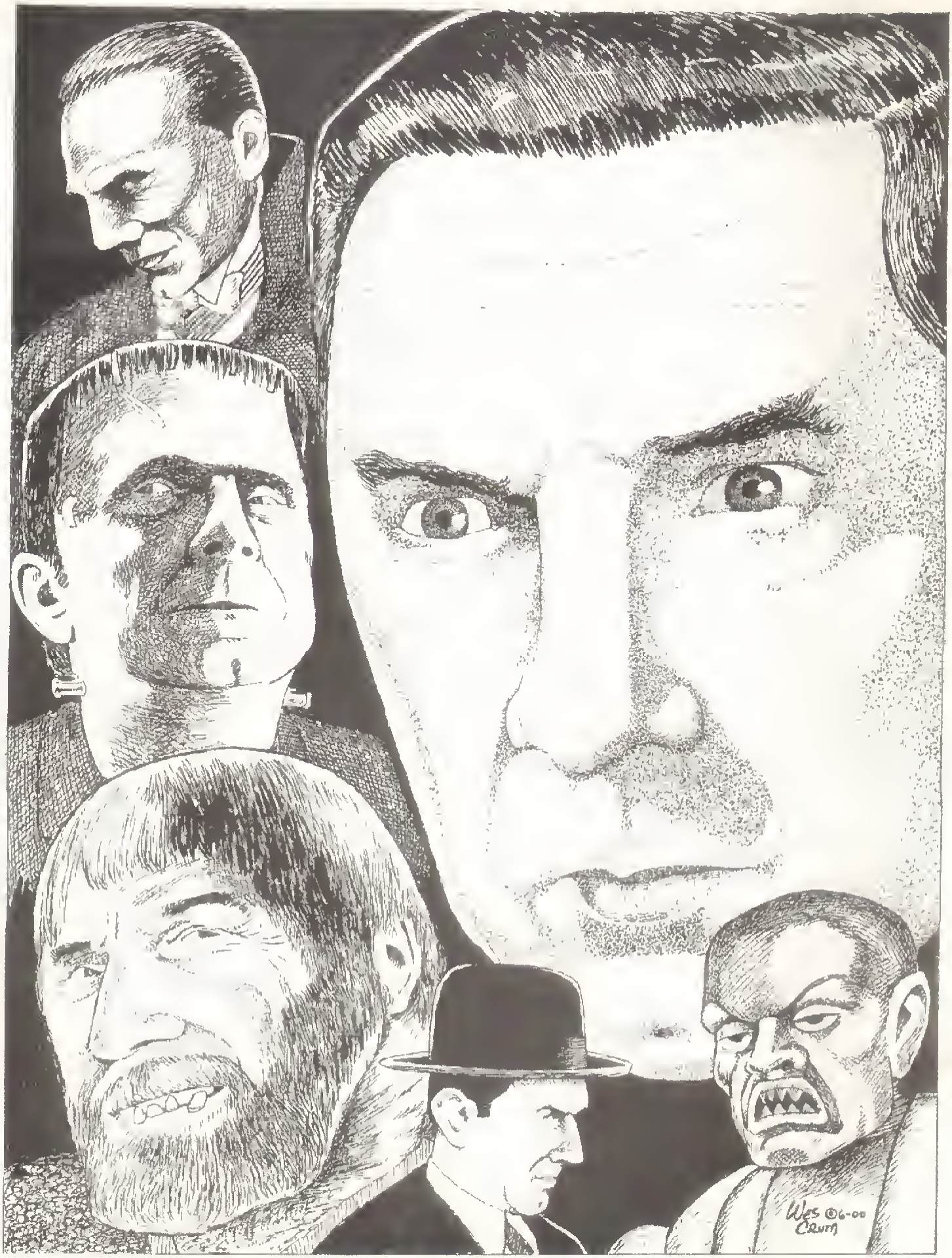
INSIDE!

FOURTH ISSUE

6 dollars

THE PHANTOM CREEPS! THE MONSTER! RETURN OF THE MONSTER!




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INSIDE THE JOURNAL OF FRANKENSTEIN™

Representing the World of Imagination and the Macabre

FOURTH ISSUE

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Victor Frankenstein, IV -Editor

Dennis J. Druktenis
Executive Editor-in-Chief & Publisher

Special Thanks to all our writers and artists named above.



FRANKENSTEIN FOCUS

It is hard to believe that over a year has passed since the last issue of JoF. The **FRANKENSTEIN FOCUS** this time around involves a lot of Bela Lugosi as well as The Monster of FRANKENSTEIN A few other surprises and continued features from the CoF Yearbook 2000 round out this packed issue. Several features including **FRANKENSTEIN FLASHBACKS, PHANTOM EMPIRE** coverage, and **LETTERS OF FRANKENSTEIN** did not make it in. We've received some **LETTERS OF FRANKENSTEIN** but we need and want more to present in CoF #29 as we start to celebrate **CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN's** 40th Anniversary in 2001

I like the format of JoF so much that I actually considered trying to add another issue this year with some special material in our files but at this point it doesn't seem doable. Perhaps next year we will find time to do two issues instead of the scheduled one a year. As far as Castle goes next year I'm not sure if we will be doing two regular issues and another yearbook or just three regular issues. I do know however, that in February 2001 you will be treated not only to **CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN** #29 but **CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN Presents The New Adventures of FRANKENSTEIN, FRANKENSTEIN LIVES AGAIN!** Tome #1. This "Castle-horror-pulp" magazine by Donald F. Glut with art by Scott Pensak will hopefully be released on a bi-monthly schedule until all eleven Tomes are published These will be the "true, authentic and authorized versions" and most of them have never been published in the U.S. in any form! I guarantee you will want to read, as well as collect them all. You will also be waiting for each issue to come out as The New Adventures of FRANKENSTEIN unfolds with each issue.

I've let enough secrets out so let's open **THE JOURNAL....THE JOURNAL OF FRANKENSTEIN #4** to reveal more secrets from "The World of Imagination and the Macabre."

-Dennis J. Druktenis

FRONT COVER: Jack C. Smith as Monk assists Bela Lugosi as Dr. Zorka in THE PHANTOM CREEPS in 12 *SPINE-SHIVERING ACTION CHAPTERS* in 1939.

BACK COVER: The Monster of FRANKENSTEIN splash panel for THE BEAUTIFUL DEAD story from THE MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN comic #32 dated August, 1954. Art and Story by Dick Briefer.



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Frankenstein Video movieguide

by Ron Adams

Back for another round of the Video Movieguide here in the Castle! Because of the constantly "in print/out of print" status of the home video marketplace, this is by no means perfect or complete. Just an attempt to list as many movies that have appeared at one time or another on video/DVD that fall in the gray and general category of classic horror and sci-fi - along with related titles, the things you may have highlighted as a kid in the TV Guide back in the 60's and 70's and 80's. Hopefully it will be a scan to help you remember films you saw as a "Monster Boomer Kid" or ones that your parents wouldn't let you stay up for. I'll try to refine and update as we go into future volumes. Right now - the letter "F!" ("Hey! Watch your mouth or no monster movies tonight, young man!")

F.P.1. (1933) Stars Conrad Veidt, Leslie Fenton, Hans Albes and Friedrich Gnass. F.P. stands for Floating Platform. An early science fiction tale of a floating station above the Atlantic Ocean. Saboteurs wish to destroy the project. Great sets, models and effects for 1933.

THE FABULOUS WORLD OF JULES VERNE (1958) Wonderful Czech film (like **JOURNEY TO THE BEGINNING OF TIME**), where it's a mix of puppetmation, puppets, miniatures and live action. A handful of Jules Verne plots and themes are united in one wonderful world of fantasy.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW (1939) Todd Slaughter goes nuts, as usual, in this tale of a werewolf-like monster (really Tod's brother!) terrorizing a village.

THE FACE BEHIND THE MASK (1941) Peter Lorre in one of his greatest roles. A German clock-maker is horribly scarred in a fire. Realizing no one will even look at him, he turns to a life of crime and evil. He meets a young blind girl who opens his eyes to all that is good. A great melodrama!

THE FACE OF FU MANCHU (1965) Christopher Lee's first portrayal of the nefarious evil genius - Fu Manchu. Thought executed, the madman re-surfaces with world domination his utmost goal. Directed by Don Sharp (**KISS OF THE VAMPIRE, WITCHCRAFT**) and starring Christopher Lee, Nigel Green, Joachim Fuchsberger and Karen Dor.

THE FACE OF MARBLE (1946) This film has got it all! A revived dead corpse, a mad doctor, lab set, invisibility and voodoo. John Carradine stars as the doctor who lets science get the best of him.

FACE OF THE SCREAMING WEREWOLF (1959) Made in Mexico and imported to the U.S. by producer Jerry Warren. Nonsense story and screwed up editing make for laughs. Though the glimmer of better days shine through in scenes with Lon Chaney Jr. as a Mummy and, best of all, turning into a wolf man again. The transformation and make-up are good. There's almost a re-enactment of the HOUSE OF DRACULA scene where Chaney is in a jail cell and turns into The Wolf Man.





FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER (1948) Bizarre. A British film that has a dream-like quality packed full of nightmarish grotesque things. A head is kept alive in the basement of a deserted church ruin. A weird witch protects the head. A woman is buried alive, then revives in a lightning storm.

FANTASTIC PLANET (1973) Wondrous animated science fiction from Czechostovakia. A Cannes film festival winner.

FANTASTIC PUPPET PEOPLE (1958) Stars John Agar, John Hoyt and June Kennedy. Also known as **ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE**. Bert I. Gordon's answer to **THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN**! A whole batch of shrunken people about the size of G.I. Joe's and Barbie's. Mad puppet maker (Hoyt) shrinks his victims and keeps them in nice plastic cylinders. They don't care for being sealed up (or shrunk for that matter!), and attempt a great escape. Twisted sci-fi fun.

THE FATAL HOUR (1940) Boris Karloff as Mr. Wong, detective. Smuggling and murder on the waterfront in San Francisco...and Wong's on the case!

FAUST (1920) This is what dreams (and nightmares) are made of! An incredible silent fantasy with an opening sequence that will stun. A demon rises over a city - a haunting vision that will stay with you. A melodrama that is heart-wrenching, wondrous and frightening. Kino's version is as clean and sharp as you'll see! Great music score.

THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS (1967) An elderly vampire hunter and his assistant are on the scene in a small village. The local castle needs some vampire extermination. Comedy/horror with beautiful

scenery, cool vampire dance ball sequence and one nasty vampire leader. Sharon Tate appeared in this film shortly before the Manson murders in which she was a real-life victim Goosebumps in more ways than one

FINGERS AT THE WINDOW (1942) Basil Rathbone gives a great performance as an all out maniacal loony! An axe-murdering psychopath who masquerades as a suave doctor-type. Incredible good mix of gum-shoe film noir/shocking horror thriller!

FIRST MAN INTO SPACE (1958) Richard Gordon production starring Marshall Thompson (**IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE** and TV's Daktari!) The first astronaut hot-dogs his mission and goes too far into space, exposing him to some nasty cosmic rays. The rays turn him into a blood craving vampire creature that looks like a submarine sandwich put in an oven at 475 degrees for two days.

FIRST MEN IN THE MOON (1964) Classic H G Wells tale of traveling to the moon. What the explorers (along with female stowaway) find are weird looking ant-men and giant caterpillars! Great effects by Ray Harryhausen.

FIRST SPACESHIP ON VENUS (1961) Spacecraft travels to Venus to find it a radioactive mess from nuclear holocaust. Vivid space adventures. East German/Polish film

FLASH GORDON: SPACE SOLDIERS (1936) AKA **FLASH GORDON** Stars Buster Crabbe, Jean Rogers, Frank Shannon, Charles Middleton and Priscilla Lawson. The first classic serial of Flash Gordon with Buster Crabbe. An alien world is crashing through space on a collision course with Earth! Great chemistry and fun. Middleton excels as the evil Ming the Merciless! 13 chapter serial.

FLASH GORDON CONQUERS THE UNIVERSE (1940) Buster Crabbe in the 12 chapter serial that had us rocking and rolling on Saturday afternoons! Love those sparking rockets.

FLASH GORDON'S TRIP TO MARS (1938) Stars Buster Crabbe, Jean Rogers, Frank Shannon, Charles Middleton and Beatrice Roberts Mars is stealing Earth's nitrogen for their war efforts It's all out war with Martians, weird Clay People and our hero, Flash 15 chapter serial

FLESH & BLOOD (1997) The story of Hammer films narrated by Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. 100 minutes of highlights and behind-the-scenes of the trials and tribulations of one of the best horror movie studios ever

FLESH & FANTASY (1943) An anthology of ironic weird fantasies that involve murder, magic and mayhem! A great cast that includes Edward G. Robinson and many more.

FLIGHT TO MARS (1951) Earthmen land on Mars The Martians need valuable resources on Earth and plot to use the Earth rocket to head for our planet. World conquest is their idea...can they be stopped?

THE FLY (1958) The sci-fi/horror classic with Vincent Price. A case of teleportation gone very, very bad. It's gonna take more than a can of Raid to take care of this beast!

THE FLYING SAUCER (1950) Two U S. agents travel to Alaska to investigate saucer sightings. The Russians are also after the secret of the saucers. Cool period slice of sci-fi history.

THE FLYING SERPENT (1946) Ancient killer reptile-bird is kept in hidden ruins by George Zucco. He uses it on people that rub him the wrong way. .if you see Zucco, smile and agree with him.

FOG ISLAND (1945) A group of people are gathered together on an island for revenge by George Zucco. The cast also includes Lionel Atwill.. see the two "maddest doctors of all" battle wits!

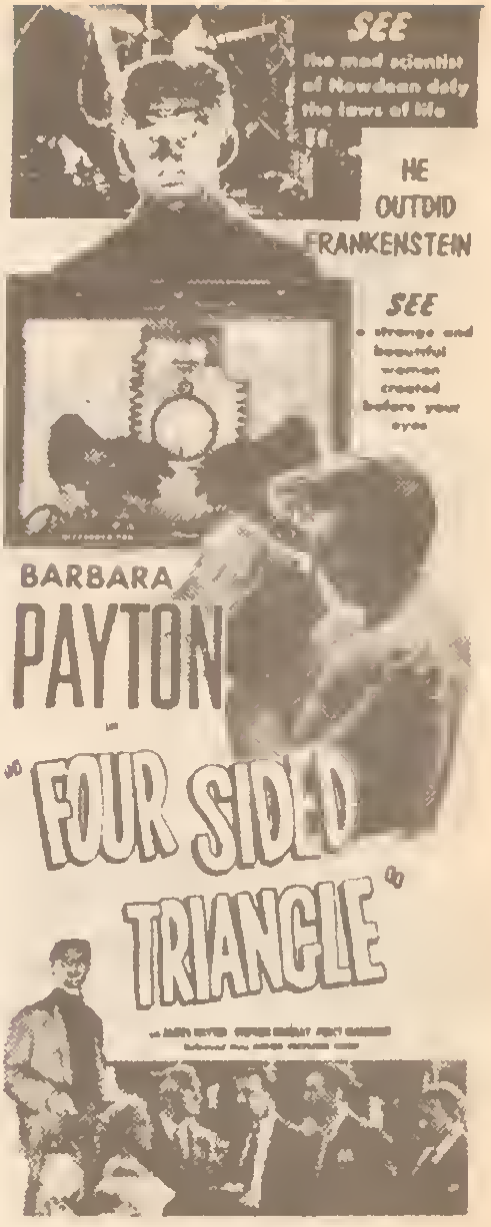
FORBIDDEN PLANET (1956) Shakespeare in space! Classic themes explored on another planet. The whole film takes place far from earth. Science fiction adventure and poetry with Leslie Nielsen, Anne Francis and Walter Pidgeon

4-D MAN (1959) Stars Robert Lansing, Lee Meriwether, James Congon and Patty Duke. Lansing is a scientist developing a way to pass objects through solid objects. He experiments on himself and about get his hand stuck in a piece of metal But, eventually he masters it .but, there's always a catch. It drains his life away slowly and he must touch others, draining their life away and killing them, to make himself strong again. His obsession with his work loses him his girlfriend and normal way of life...in the third dimension. Really cool late fifties horror/sci-fi The soundtrack is notable too; it's an odd mix of bopping jazz. Strange, and unique.

FOUR SIDED TRIANGLE (1952) Early sci-fi from Hammer films with cloning and evil. Mad scientists, electro shock and a love triangle (plus throw a clone in!).

FRANKENSTEIN (1931) Boris Karloff's name would never be forgotten after this classic from director James Whale. The fully restored version from Universal. Fritz, Fritz. .stay away from that criminal brain.. oh, no leave it alone Fritz Leave it alone

FRANKENSTEIN (1973) Bo Stevens is the monster in this version of the Mary Shelley classic Also stars Susan Strasberg and Robert Foxworth



FRANKENSTEIN & ME (1995) Director Robert Tinnel has brought back al of those childhood memories and fears. .parents, arguments and the love of monsters A carny comes to to town featuring a sideshow that has the "real" Frankenstein monster. The body of the monster falls off a truck at night when the show leaves town A 12-year old hides the crate containing the body, in hopes of a stormy night, to revive it! Burt Reynolds, in a restrained role, plays the boy's father. A loving look back at the Universal monster movies and those of us who grew up in the sixties putting together Aurora models Find this one -monster magic

FRANKENSTEIN AND THE MONSTER FROM HELL (1973) Cushing is back as Baron Frankenstein with a beautiful mute female assistant. The monster is a bit Quasimodo looking (anyone that looks like

Quasimodo is okay in my book!) He's portrayed by David Prowse (**HORROR OF FRANKENSTEIN**).

FRANKENSTEIN CREATED WOMAN (1967) Baron Frankenstein is revived from the dead by an assistant and he's back to work! No rest for the weary .Peter Cushing as the Baron implants the soul of a murderer into the body of a beautiful woman

FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE SPACE MONSTER (1964) A robot-astronaut meets up with a hideous space creature. Scooters, 60's surf guitar music and fun!

FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN (1943) The monster's back (Lugosi this time), discovered frozen beneath castle ruins by Larry Talbot (Lon Chaney) A great opening sequence as graverobbers break into the Talbot mausoleum Eerie and spooky. Chaney is terrific as the cursed werewolf and the clash of the monsters is unforgettable from all our childhoods

FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED (1969) I remember seeing the ads for this on TV when it was in its original theatrical run...just the trailer preview scared me! Lightning flashing graveyards and ghouls resurrected by Frankenstein. Cushing is back in the fifth film of the Hammer Frankenstein series. Brain transplants and grave robbing abound.

FRANKENSTEIN 1970 (1958) Karloff plays Dr. Frankenstein working on a new monster. A film crew are using his castle and.. regretting it. Wait, wait, does that monster have a bucket on his head!

FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER (1958) Grandson of Dr. Frankenstein is back to develop a new monster...a female. .Monstrous (literally) problems occur. Those Frankenstein's have the worst luck! 1950's fear show!



FREAKS (1932) The outrageous film that was banned in various countries. Shocking brutal world of the circus sideshow directed by Tod Browning (**DRACULA**, **THE UNHOLY THREE**, **THE UNKNOWN**, etc.).

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WHITE ZOMBIE (1932/FILM+BELA INTERVIEWS /TRAILER/ROAN/$20)
THE WOLF MAN (1941/CHANEY/MCA UNIVERSAL/$25)

FRENZY (1945) Stars Derrick de Marney, Joan Greenwood, Beresford Egan and Valentine Dyall A mad sculptor, insane with jealousy, brutally murders his wife. But where is the body Nobody knows...until her spirit returns, haunting the old studio apartment. Well acted and eerie with a great finale! You might remember Valentine Dyall (who has a small role), for two other creepies: **HORROR HOTEL** (the warlock/hitchhiker) and in **THE GHOST OF RASHMON HALL**. You won't forget his voice.

FROGS (1972) Stars Ray Milland, Sam Elliot and Joan Van Ark. Remember the great movie poster for this. The frog with a human hand sticking out of its mouth! It's on the video box art too! Milland plays a no-good grump who lives on an island and poisons all the vermin. Well the vermin decide to take matters into their own webbed feet!

FROM HELL IT CAME (1957) It's the tree monster! A native sacrifice and black arts bring a sacrificed man back from the grave as a killing beast whose bark is worse than its bit The monster looks like a crazed refugee from THE WIZARD OF OZ's forest of talking trees. Check out the New York accents of the natives. One of the best nutty films of the 50's!

THE FROZEN GHOST (1945) Features Chaney hiding out, trying to get his life straightened out in a wax museum. Wrong place. The museum has Martin Koslack playing a sculptor with a bit too twisted of a brain.

FURY OF THE WOLFMAN (1970) Spanish horror with cult hero Paul Naschy doing his wolf man thing!



DR. MANIAC'S MOVIE REVIEW

Now Playing: *THE PHANTOM CREEPS*

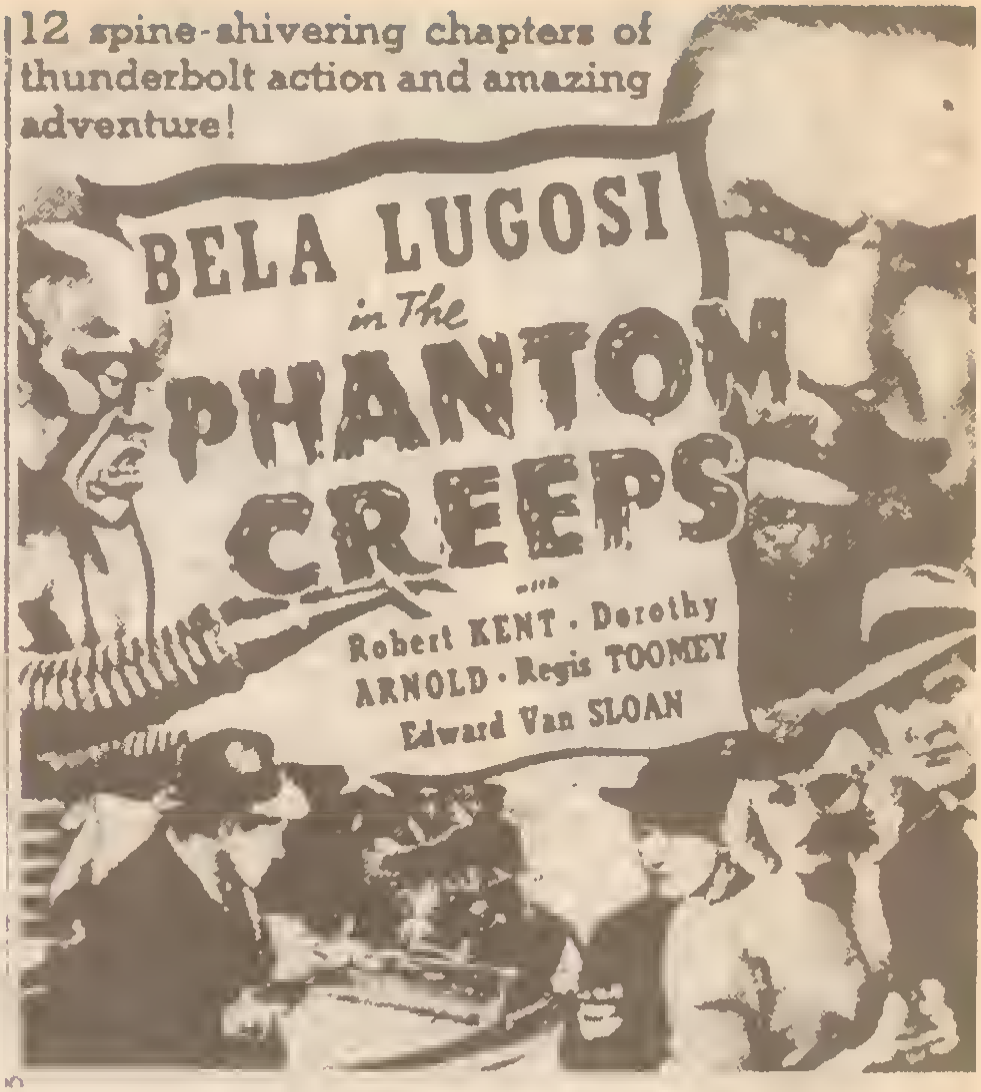
Hello sleazos and sleazettes! Dr. Maniac is back again to take you on another journey to the fantastic world of Scary movies. This time we are going to explore a Scary Serial from Universal Pictures and starring everyone's favorite mad scientist, Bela Lugosi. It's called THE PHANTOM CREEPS and comes from 1939, the year that movie monsters suddenly became popular again after a 3 year slump.

Multi-chapter serials had been a part of movies for a long time. They earned the nickname "Cliffhangers" because of suspense packed endings where the hero (or preferably, the heroine was literally dangling over a cliff facing certain doom; at least until the next chapter when we saw that a narrow escape had only been moments away all the time. The most famous serial of the silent days was the 1914 thriller THE PERILS OF PAULINE which made Pearl White an international star. It was followed by similarly based stories with titles like THE EXPLOITS OF ELAINE, and THE HAZARDS OF HELEN (both 1916). Other memorable silents included BEWARE THE OCTOPUS (1917) and THE MASTER MYSTERY (1921). You could never tell just who would pop up in a serial either. PERILS OF PAULINE featured Crane Wilbur as the hero. He would later retire from acting to write stage plays. Also in the cast was Warren William who would go on to play many character roles including "Dr Lloyd" in THE WOLF MAN (1941). Warner Olan, who would eventually become the screen's most memorable Charlie Chan, played the first in a series of villainous Orientals in THE EXPLOITS OF ELAINE. Even world famous magician Harry Houdini took time out to appear in a serial. He was the hero of THE MASTER MYSTERY and battled a robot called "The Automaton".

Regrettably time has not been kind to many of the silents. Only 9 of the 14 chapters of THE PERILS OF PAULINE still exist. A few stills are all that remain of THE MASTER MYSTERY. Several scenes from BEWARE THE OCTOPUS turned up in the documentary THE DAYS OF THRILLS AND LAUGHTER and

they appear to be all that survives of that film!

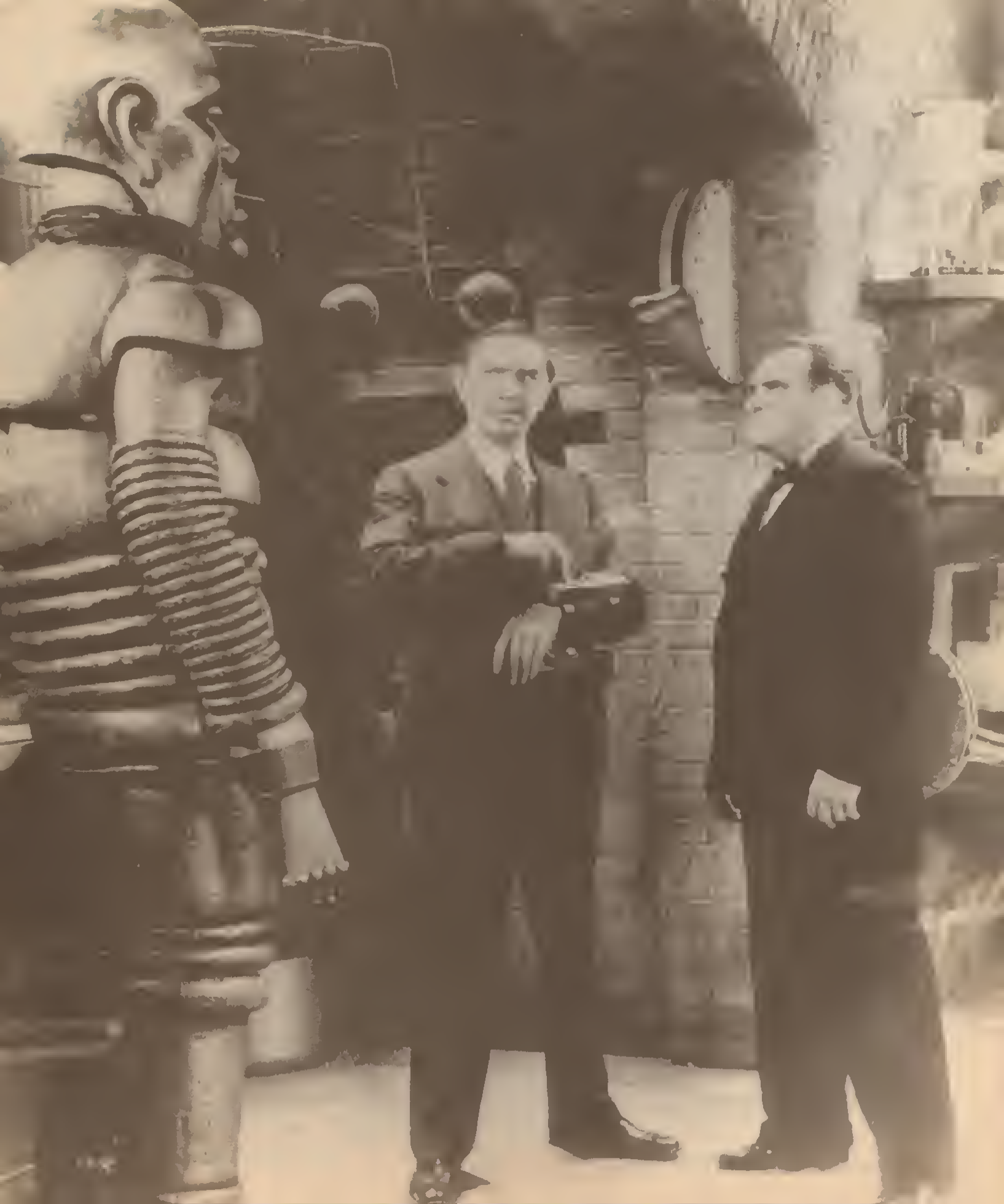
The best serials by far came out of Mascot Pictures, a company owned by Nat Levine. Their first chapter play, KING OF THE KONGO (1929) offered Walter Miller as a government agent looking for a comrade who disappeared in the jungle. He uncovers a gang of diamond smugglers, led by none other than Boris Karloff! The title refers to a gorilla that prowls the jungle near an ancient tomb where a fortune in diamonds is hidden. Hero Walter Miller and bad guy Karloff would be at odds once again in the 1931 Mascot serial KING OF THE WILD (1931). Later offerings from the studio included SHADOW OF THE EAGLE and THE HURRICANE EXPRESS (both 1932) that starred a young John Wayne as the hero THE THREE MUSKETEERS (1933) offered John Wayne and Creighton Chaney (Lon Jr.) as Foreign Legion officers. THE GALLOPING GHOST (1931) starred a real life football hero "Red" Grange. THE WHISPERING SHADOW (1932) was Bela Lugosi's first serial He plays Arnold Strang, a museum owner who is suspected of being the title villain but who turns out to be an agent for his (unnamed) government who is on the trail of the same villain! Mascot became Republic Pictures in 1936 and their serials remained their best of all. Between 1936 and 1955 they produced 67 of them. To this day ask any serial fan what their favorite is and they are likely to name a Republic title



Of course, competing studios jumped on the serial bandwagon. RKO offered THE LAST FRONTIER in 1932 with Creighton Chaney, as a Zorro-like masked western hero. Bela Lugosi played the hero in THE RETURN OF CHANDU (1934) for Principal Pictures. At first Universal Pictures tried to stay away from serials. Studio boss Carl Laemmle wanted to produce only upscale quality pictures. It was Laemmle who hired Erich von Stroheim in 1918 to write, direct and star in FOOLISH WIVES which became the first Universal Picture to cost over $1 million. Laemmle was proud of this fact and put the production cost up in lights on a billboard, changing the amount as production costs went up. He also spelled the directors name as $trohiem, which Erich himself considered "tacky". His son, Carl Jr., knew that low budget programmers were what brought in the money to enable them to make the big budget pictures that his dad loved. Universal began making serials in 1929 with ACE OF SCOTLAND YARD starring Crauford Kent, a character actor whose only claim to fame is that he unmasked Lon Chaney Sr. in the trial scene of THE UNHOLY THREE (1930). Universal also made the first part-talkie Tarzan serial, TARZAN THE TIGER in 1929. Frank Merrill played the jungle king and he is credited with having invented the Tarzan yell. According to Merrill the cry happened by accident when he stepped on something sharp while running through the jungle set and the director allegedly said "Hey, that's great! We're keeping that!"

Sadly most of Universal's serials were unremarkable. Most were westerns starring sage brush stalwarts like Tom Tyler, Tim McCoy or Buck Jones and sporting titles like THE INDIANS ARE COMING (1930), BATTLING WITH BUFFALO BILL (1931) or GORDON OF GHOST CITY (1933). It wasn't until the 1936 serial FLASH GORDON that Universal showed what it was really capable of. A fabulous cast toplined by Buster Crabbe as the muscular blonde hero and Charles Middleton playing the role of his career as the villain made this one an instant hit and assured Universal's immortality serial-wise Flash would return in two more serials and Buster Crabbe would do a spinoff hero in BUCK ROGERS.

Up to this point all the serials made by





Universal were tired and true formats like westerns, mysteries and jungle thrillers. The success of FLASH GORDON inspired them to tackle more subjects with a science fiction theme. Which brings us to the serial I have called you here tonight to talk about. Sleazos and sleazettes, submitted for your approval, THE PHANTOM CREEPS.

Bela Lugosi was a hot property again after the runaway success of SON OF FRANKENSTEIN. Of course, that is not to say that he was given the respect he was due. 20th Century Fox cast him opposite The Ritz Brothers in THE GORILLA. Director Allen Dwan commented, "The plot was altered to fit the comedic talents of The Ritz Brothers. They dominated the show. As far as Lugosi was concerned, we all knew he was exploited for billing purposes. The role did not do justice to his enormous talents. He was a professional and it was a pleasure to work with him." Lugosi's contribution to the film may have had a lot to do with the movies staying power because THE GORILLA remained in theatrical release until 1951.

THE PHANTOM CREEPS had Bela playing Dr Alexander Zorka a brilliant, but as usual misunderstood, scientist In the opening chapter *"The Menacing Power"* we learn that Dr. Zorka is so devoted to his work that he trusts no one, not even his former colleagues. His wife (Dora Clement) tries to persuade him that his former associate Dr Mallory (Edwin Stanley) is indeed his friend and he should share his discoveries with the U.S.

Government Zorka's affection for his wife is sincere enough (unlike later Lugosi scientists who had no time for a personal life) but he is so paranoid about keeping his inventions to himself that he orders her away.

Trusting only his assistant Monk (Jack C. Smith) whom he helped to escape from prison, Zorka confides that, among other things, he had developed a giant indestructible robot. Monk takes one look at the automaton, which is surely the ugliest robot in movie history, and replies "The cops will never let that thing walk around the streets." That is when Zorka shows him his other device, a Devisualiser Belt that makes whoever wears it invisible. (Never mind that an invisible man in real life would be totally blind because light would not be able to reflect off his retinas and send images to this brain. Just keep saying "It's only a movie, only a movie..."). He also has a collection of mechanical spiders that are drawn to small discs. When the spider and the disc connect, they explode and release a gas that sends anyone close by into a coma. Truly Dr. Zorka has been a very busy man.

The American government is not the only one interested in Zorka's inventions. Foreign spies have set up headquarters in a school of foreign languages. Their leader (Edward van Sloan) is willing to pay for Zorka's devices but figures stealing them will be easier and more economical. Meanwhile Zorka's former colleague Dr. Mallory has turned the job of getting the inventions over to Military Intelligence officer Capt. Bob West (Robert Kent). And since we have to have a heroine, newspaper reporter Jean Drew (Dorothy Arnold) teams up with Capt. West in the hope of getting a story.

It would take half this issue to discuss PHANTOM CREEPS and its many cliffhangers and plot twists in detail; and while Dennis, our beloved publisher, is very generous in allotting space for my column he is not about to go overboard so let me start encapsulating things. Capt West visits Zorka's home and the scientist mistakenly believes the G-man has stolen his secrets. He sabotages Bob's plane with one of his mechanical spiders. The plane crashes but Bob escapes unhurt. Unfortunately Zorka's wife was also on the plane and she is killed. The knowledge of this drives the doctor over the edge and he swears vengeance against all those he thinks are responsible for her death. Faking his own death, Zorka returns to his mansion and hides in the secret lab in the basement.



Now in serials like this both the hero and the villain have more lives than a roomful of cats so there are multiple shootouts and fistfights and Capt. West survives car crashes, electrocution, drowning, a train wreck and a wrestling match with the robot. In chapter 6, *"The Iron Monster"* we learn the true secret of Zorka's power. He discovered a meteorite that carried a radiation so powerful that anyone who comes near it will die unless they first expose their bodies to a protective gas. By harnessing the power of the meteorite Zorka believes he can become the most powerful man on Earth. Universal saved money by illustrating Lugosi's flashback with scenes from the 1936 movie THE INVISIBLE RAY. That character in the protective suit is actually Boris Karloff? We can only wonder if Bela knew about the insertion of the stock footage. If he did, it certainly did not help the resentment of his British rival.



Naturally all serials have some plot padding to stretch the story for 12, or in some cases 15 chapters. In Chapter 7 *"The Menacing Mist"* Bela rents an office in the same building as Edward van Sloan's spies. He has barely set up shop before the spies discover he is there thanks to a "neometer", a device that locates magnetized materials; meteorites for instance. They steal the source of Zorka's power and he decides to pack up and move!





(Since he occupied the office for only 30 minutes do you suppose Zorka got his deposit back?)

Most of the time the spies are shown as not being terribly bright. In Chapter 11, *"The Blast"*, van Sloan knows that government agents are nearby with a radio detector but he refuses to stop broadcasting to his home base. "They will never break the code I am using," he boasts. As fate, and the script, would have it the good guys don't have to. Van Sloan's henchmen are so dumb they discuss their plans right out in the open and are overheard by Jean. Of course the G-Men are not much better Capt. West is so determined to round up the spies that he places himself in danger several times. In Chapter 11 he and Jean are chasing van Sloan and they drive right through a construction company roadblock into a blasting site. In 1939 you had to wait a whole week to find out that Jean merely sped up the car and got away from the danger area before the rocks started falling. I'll bet kids who faithfully followed the action were as disappointed by that relatively easy escape as they had been by the end of Chapter 9, *"Speeding Doom"*, when we saw Bob and Jean survive a spectacular train derailment by simply being so far back on the line their car was not involved in the wreck

More plot padding comes thanks to Monk rebelling against Dr. Zorka more than once. In one case he makes himself invisible and tries to steal the meteorite "I am stronger than you now Dr. Zorka." he claims, "Stronger than the police! You'll never make a slave of me again!" Wanna bet? Zorka blasts him with a paralyzing ray and has the man back in line in less than one minute! Later on Monk complains to the robot "I'm as much his slave as you are. When he's finished with us, he will throw us both away." Zorka, who is standing right behind his none-too-bright helper

sardonically intones "But I am not done with you yet!" and leads Monk away by the arm like a reproachful parent!

It was Chapter 12, *"To Destroy The World"*, that everyone was waiting for. Sure we all knew at the start that the villain would get his; but knowing that wasn't enough, we all had to *see* it! (Only in one serial did the final chapter see the villain still alive and plotting his return, Republic's 1940 offering DRUMS OF FU MANCHU.) Finally recovering his meteorite, Zorka distills its destructive force into small containers. Stealing a plane he and Monk stage a bombing raid on the city. Regrettably this is the biggest letdown in the script. The explosions are small scale and unimpressive. The ultimate power we have been hearing about for 11 chapters now seems to be no more powerful than ordinary TNT. Still, hearing Lugosi's maniacal laugh as he tosses one bomb after another out of his small plane almost makes it worthwhile.

Capt. West leads what looks like the entire Air Force against Zorka, cautioning his men not to fire at the madman's bi-plane because "If you hit the meteorite we'll all be blown out of the sky." West, it turns out, had nothing to worry about. Zorka bellows to the skies "I'll take them all with me!" but Monk decides "I'll not be killed! I'll give up first." Zorka goes to strangle his disloyal (but practical) assistant and the plane goes out of control (which one of them was flying it anyway?). Spiraling downward, the plane crashes into the ocean and the meteorite explodes. Dr. Zorka and all his inventions are lost forever; and maybe it is better that way. They were just too powerful for any one government to have all to themselves.

Then again, it would have been nice to see a little more than the small waterspout that erupts when Lugosi's plane crashes. For a device that was supposed to be so powerful it is very disappointing to see Dr. Zorka go out not with a bang but with a splash. Couldn't Universal have gone to its stock footage library one more time for some scenes of a tidal wave hitting the coast?

THE PHANTOM CREEPS is a good serial but it had the potential to be a *great* serial and surely would have been if those



in power had paid a little more attention to certain things. Bela's mad scientist never really gets to go head to head with Edward van Sloan's spy chief. Considering how memorable their standoff was in DRACULA one wishes a similar confrontation had been written into the script. Plot twists come and go quickly but since this is a 12 chapter serial we probably weren't supposed to keep track of them. Monk turns traitor to Dr. Zorka in Chapter 3 but is back on his old bosses side by Chapter 4. Jean is captured by the spies in Chapter 6 but is able to escape by convincing them she is actually on their side. Speaking of Monk, he also seems to be indestructible. Shot in more than one chapter he is healthy again within minutes. Of course the explanation for that could be that in serials no one, either villain or good guy, is a very good shot until the final chapter and Monk was only grazed every time.

There are good lines in the serial but for some reason they all seem misplaced. In one instance Lugosi declares "One by one my enemies will be disposed of until I am master of the universe!" A grandiose boast like that seemed better suited to Emperor Ming than an Earthbound scientist who is not really evil (not at first anyway) but who has his judgement clouded by grief over his wife and his own paranoia.

Ford Beebe got his start writing serials. His name is listed as a contributor to earlier efforts like KING OF THE WILD and LAST OF THE MOHICANS (1932). In 1942 he directed Bela again in the scary mystery NIGHT MONSTER. One of the visitors to the set of that film was Alfred Hitchcock, who was amazed that a movie of such quality could have been made in only 11 days. Saul Goodkind started out as an editor before graduating to director. Knowing his background makes the clumsy editing in much of PHANTOM CREEPS a deep mystery and an even deeper source of disappointment. If Saul had supervised the cutting I'll bet the serial would have looked much better.

Now about that robot! With its oversized head, half closed eyes, sharpened teeth and permanent scowl if you remember nothing else about his serial the image of that robot has to be etched into your mind. Each chapter ended with a shot of the robot walking

directly at the camera. After hearing him described as such an unstoppable force it is quite a letdown to see him destroyed relatively easily when machine gun fire causes his mechanism to explode. Stuntman Bud Wolfe played the metal man. That same year he also doubled for Boris Karloff in SON OF FRANKENSTEIN. During the 1960s civil rights activists attacked Universal because, they claimed, the robot had "obvious Negroid features" and repeated use of the word "slave" when referring to the metaloid could only mean the studio was being racist. It is doubtful that Universal reacted to this claim and the accusations soon died down when it became obvious that no one was paying attention. The counter-culture embraced the robot though and his likeness began appearing in underground magazines and on the album covers for garage bands. I wonder why Aurora never put out a model kit of the robot?

Universal saved lots of money by turning their stock footage library for most of the disaster scenes in the serial. So very *much* stock footage in fact that a seasoned serial watcher begins to long for the realistic miniature work of Howard and Theodore Lydecker who worked for Republic. A train wreck and a crashing car are from THE INVISIBLE MAN (1933), the opening credits for each chapter use the desolate landscape from SON OF FRANKENSTEIN. There are also many lab shots from the earlier Frankenstein films that show off Kenneth Strickfaden's fabulous electrical equipment. All the music can be recognized as coming from BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN and WEREWOLF OF LONDON. One might conceivably accuse Universal of a lapse in good taste in one scene in the final chapter. When Bela is tossing vials of his explosive from his small plane one happens to land on a zeppelin and the resultant explosion scene is newsreel footage of The Hindenburg burning! Then again if Universal used bad judgement in resorting to footage of such a recent (not to mention tragic) disaster then we must cite Republic for a similar gaffe because the same footage shows up in their serial DICK TRACY RETURNS.

Performances are fair, but it is Bela's movie from the start to finish. The expression on his face when he sees his robot destroyed or when he realizes his plane is about to be overtaken are delightful. Oddly enough there is comedy relief on both sides. Jack C. Smith provides the humor for the bad guys while Eddie Acuff plays a good natured but bumbling government agent. Dorothy Arnold was a Universal contract player. If she is remembered at all today it is not for her contributions to movie history but because she later married baseball great Joe DiMaggio. Familiar faces to serial followers included Roy Barcroft (THE PURPLE MONSTER STRIKES) and Jerry Frank (THE LOST CITY).



Bela plays Dr. Zorka as a semi-sympathetic character. In Chapter One we see that he is truly devoted to his wife but he keeps the knowledge of his work secret even from her. When he learns she has perished in a plane crash (which, remember, *he* is responsible for) Lugosi plays the scene for all its dramatic content. Zorka has shaved off his beard to disguise himself and yet when he stands looks at the body of his wife his sense of shock and grief is so strong that he nearly betrays his identity. It is only through his own strength of character that he does not give himself away. In those few moments he goes for grief stricken to clear determination to avenge her death. His obsession becomes stronger until, by Chapter 12, he is clearly insane and his desire to get revenge is taken over by his want to conquer the world. At first, we can almost understand Zorka's reluctance to turn his secrets over to the U.S. Government (or for that matter *any* government). He has discovered a powerful destructive force and naturally he does not want to hand it over to people who will more than likely use it for war. There is an uncanny real life parallel in the story of Dr. J Robert Oppenheimer who developed the atomic bomb.

This was Lugosi's last serial. For the next year he worked earnestly at changing his screen image. His next film after PHANTOM CREEPS was NINOTCHKA, directed by Ernst Lubitsch for MGM. He does not appear until the movie has less than 10 minutes left to go but his brief performance as Commisar Razinin, a no-nonsense, high ranking Communist Party member is quite memorable. Then he went to RKO to appear in THE SAINT'S DOUBLE TROUBLE, where the character he played did not even have a name! He was given fourth billing and listed as "The Partner". In Universal's BLACK FRIDAY (1940) he played Eric Marnay, probably the only Hungarian gangster in New York's underworld, and in RKO's YOU'LL FIND OUT he, Peter Lorre and Boris Karloff were all villains who met



their match against big band leader Kay Kyser By 1941 he was back playing mad doctors again. His first film that year was THE DEVIL BAT for PRC. He would go on to play many more scientists but with one exception, Dr. Vornoff in BRIDE OF THE MONSTER (1956), none with the ambition of Dr Zorka

Universal did not venture deeply into science fiction territory again for its serials Later entries included THE GREEN HORNET (1940) and THE LOST CITY OF THE JUNGLE (1946) which had slight science fiction elements but were basically action adventures GANG BUSTERS (1940) had audiences thinking it was a Scary Serial with villains who had been brought back from the dead. After just a few chapters though we learned The League Of Murdered Men were just ordinary gangsters who faked their deaths using a powerful drug. The 1942 serial OVERLAND MAIL gave Lon Chaney Jr. the chance to play a leading man for once and he did very well. With the end of WW2 Universal tried to upgrade their image in the eyes of its audience and retired from producing serials with THE MYSTERIOUS MR. M in 1946, a western starring Clayton Moore. Columbia Pictures offered serials like THE MONSTER AND THE APE (1945) and adapted comics like BATMAN (1942), SUPERMAN (1948), BLACKHAWK (1952) and CAPTAIN VIDEO (1952). The finally abandoned serials in 1956 after production of BLAZING THE OVERLAND TRAIL starring Lee Roberts. Republic was responsible for producing what is called the best serial of all time, THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN MARVEL, in 1941. They also came out with CAPTAIN AMERICA (1942), offered a female Zorro (Linda Sterling) in



ZORRO'S BLACK WHIP (1944), FLYING DISC MEN FROM MARS (1951) and PANTHER GIRL OF THE KONGO (1954) before calling it a day in 1955 with KING OF THE CARNIVAL.

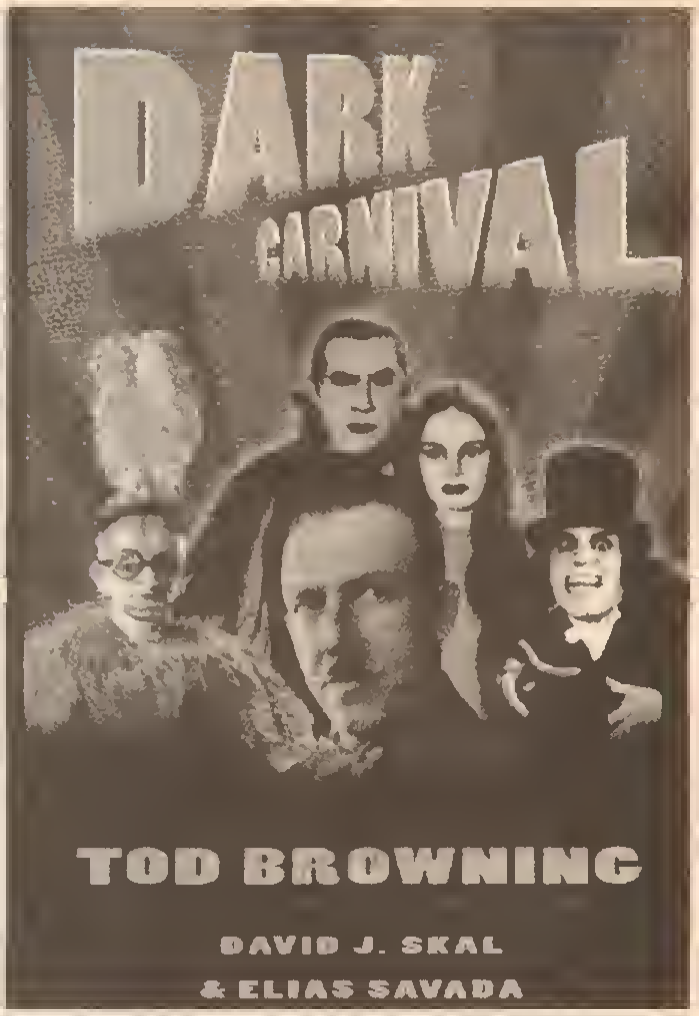
There is something about serials that makes most movie watchers yearn for the simpler times of a bygone era. Multi-chaptered, action packed cliffhangers will never be made again. Audiences have become too sophisticated and productions costs would be too high. We have entered the era of Computer Generated Imagery (CGI). Personally though I still hope that maybe someday some technician will get tired of the soulless machine created special effects and look at the skillful miniature world of the Lydeckers and wonder "Could I do something like that?" and then perhaps give it a try. I can dream can't I?

FRANKENSTEIN Book Reviews



DARK CARNIVAL: THE SECRET WORLD OF HOLLYWOOD'S MASTER OF THE MACABRE

by David J. Skal & Elias Savada
Anchor Books (Doubleday)
Hardcover· 1995· $23.00·
ISBN O-385-47406-7



Reviewed by Dick Nitelinger

It is hard to think of a director who had more of an impact on the horror film during the period 1925-36 than Tod Browning. From his work with Lon Chaney Sr. in THE UNHOLY THREE through his last film of this type, THE DEVIL DOLL, Browning spanned the transition period from silent films to talkies. Yet, he remained an enigmatic figure, rarely seen after his forced departure from films in 1942.

Film historians David J. Skal (HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC, THE MONSTER SHOW) and Elias Savada have managed to chronicle the often secretive director's life in DARK CARNIVAL. Piecing together interviews with friends and colleagues, family documents, and published accounts, they have put together a biography of the man often referred to as "the Edgar Allen Poe of films".

The book begins with a look at Browning's childhood in Louisville, and his subsequent escape into the world of carnivals, where he worked as a barker. The authors question the credibility of some of his press accounts from this period, perhaps destroying a few myths. Still, truth is often stranger than fiction, and the experiences of this period, which included working with sideshow freaks and magicians, witnessing the murder of two young children by their distraught mother, and the start of a life-long affair with alcohol, result in a thread which is woven throughout the rest of the book.

Next, Browning's early work for legendary director D. W. Griffith is examined. Curiously, he honed his comedic talents during this time period. This led to his first directorial work in 1917. It was shortly after this that Browning met Lon Chaney.

Chaney's influence on Browning, and their subsequent work together constitutes a solid third of the book. All of their collaborations are examined, and woven throughout are reviews, and reminiscences from colleagues which appeared in print, or in correspondence. However, contrary to popular myth, the authors conclude that ".. the lack of documentary evidence for the standing legend of a dedicated creative relationship between the men is, to say the least striking." The chapter ends with a look at their first talking pictures (which neither man felt comfortable with), including Browning's first picture with Bela Lugosi.

Of course after Chaney's death, Lugosi went on to star in Browning's version of DRACULA. Here the author's present a picture of a somewhat disorganized production. Even worse, they point out that, "Finally, the studio did not permit Browning a final cut on the film, and according to (longtime friend) William S. Hart, Jr., the director hated DRACULA in its final version". They leave the reader longing for what might have been with the simple statement, "Hart said that he saw Browning's original cut of DRACULA as a boy, and remembered the director's surreal sense of timing "was the most eerie thing I have ever seen...It was not horror where you saw anything. It was horror of the unknown." Skal and Savada place much of the blame for the final version on Universal's doorstep, claiming that the studio insisted on cuts in dialogue as well as several soundless sequences.

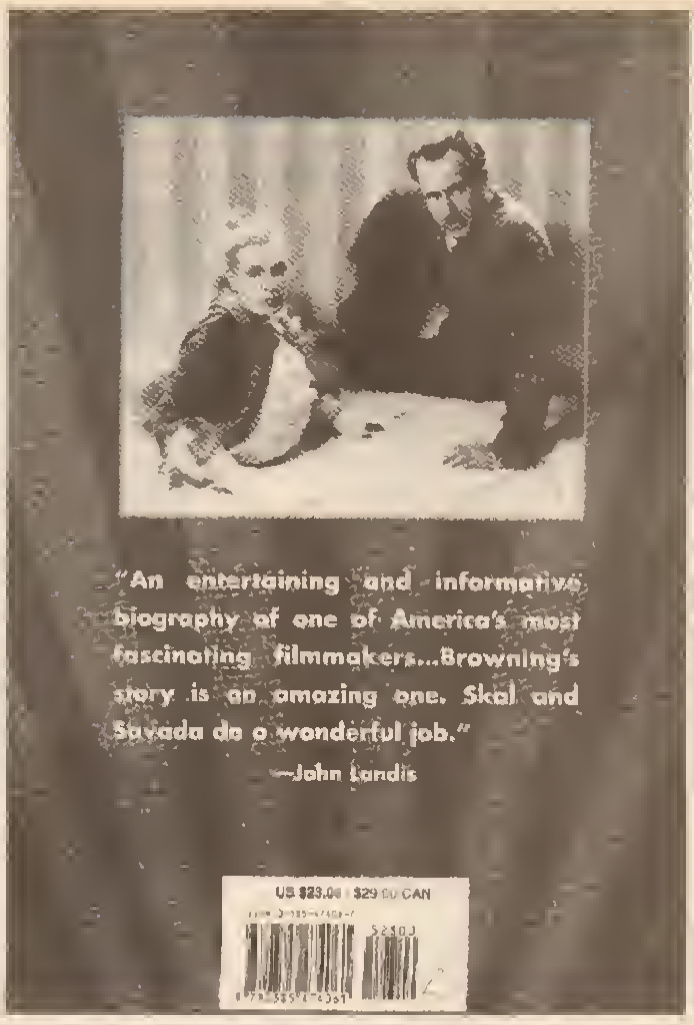
An entire chapter is dedicated to the director's most controversial film, FREAKS. The film has enjoyed a revival of late (having been banned in some countries for thirty years), making the authors' thoughts and reminiscences of those who took part even more appealing. Most contemporary reviews have focused on the negative reaction to the film, but Skal and Savada also describe how MGM tried to appeal to the viewer's sympathy in its publicity, pointing out that these

were human beings too

The backlash from FREAKS affected Browning's relationship with MGM The author's frame their discussion of MARK OF THE VAMPIRE in the context of his need to break out of that formula What better way than to combine elements of two of his most successful films, LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT and DRACULA? Included are reminiscences from Carroll Borland and others. Likewise, trouble with the Production Code Administration as well as the British Board of Censors, influenced THE DEVIL DOLL, which is examined next. Finally, the director's last projects are explored, and the years up to his death in 1962 are described by friends and colleagues.

DARK CARNIVAL includes numerous rare photographs, and a complete filmography, (as actor and director) with a short synopsis of each film, and/or numerous reviews from the time of their release. Film scholars will find sources well documented with endnotes.

Those who found assessing Browning's career a rather straightforward process may be surprised by a few of the revelations found in this work. Assessing his life is a bit more difficult due to his private, enigmatic nature, but Skal and Savada have managed to root out what information there is to be had, and have pieced together an erudite and insightful biography. Students and fans will find it well worth reading.



THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS

by Guy Endore

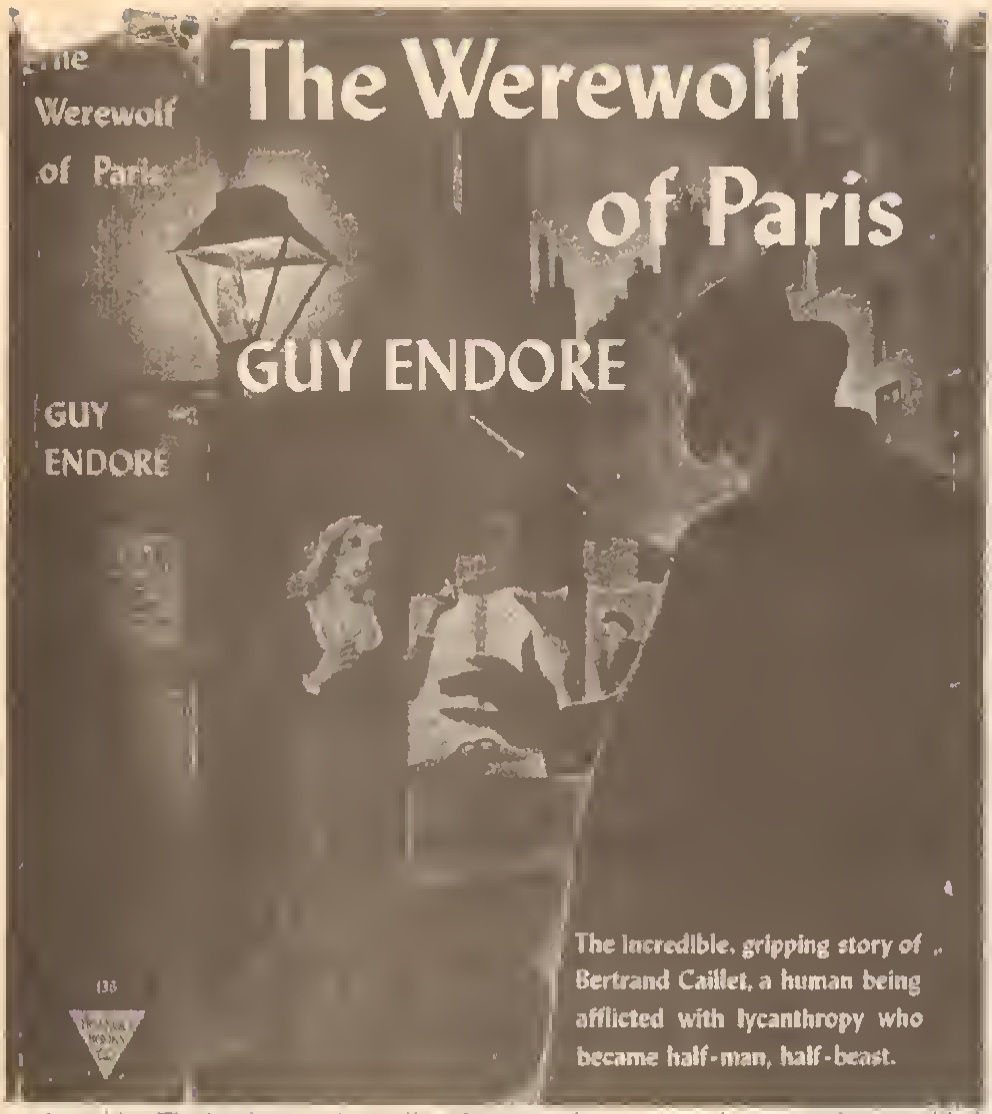
Reviewed by Michael L. Mathews

"He panted through his opened mouth. And he felt his tongue, his tongue, the short bulky tongue of a man, begin to flatten and lengthen 'God help me!' he cried. But now that tongue was curling out of his mouth, was hanging over his teeth. Unable to resist any more, he sprang from his bed. He went to a corner of his room, muzzled under a piece of cloth and dragged forth an arm, a human arm The last of the two arms he had taken from La belle Normande "

The visceral impact of this description has not been blunted by the passage of sixty-seven years. Aside from the physical horror of this scene, the telling detail of the transformation of the tongue is both economically descriptive and tactually communicative The paragraph quoted above is in essence what most horror writing aspires to, yet rarely does achieve.

The novel THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS, from which the above excerpt is taken, was first published in 1933 by Farrar & Rinehart. Its author Harry Relis, better known by his pseudonym of Samuel Guy Endore, was involved with some familiar genre works prior to and after the publication of this book Relis had previously in 1929 translated German novelist Hanns Heniz Ewers' ALRAUNE for John Day & Company. Ewers' book involves a pseudo-scientific attempt at artificial conception, using the worst human donors imaginable. The result is a soulless femme fatale who is destructive to all who come in contact with her. Relis also contributed to the screenplays of MARK OF THE VAMPIRE, MAD LOVE (both 1935), and THE DEVIL DOLL (1936). According to Robert Bloch in his introduction to the 1992 reprint of this novel by Citadel Books, Relis sold his book outright to Farrar & Rinehart for $750. In the midst of the Depression this must have seemed like a good offer for a novel whose main character is a werewolf, and a story line that includes cannibalism, necrophilia, rape, incest,





and suicide. The book was a bestseller. It was reprinted in 1943 by Triangle Books in hardcover, in 1962 by Ace Books in paperback, and of course the Citadel trade paperback noted above. Universal Studios bought the film rights to the book. Eventually Universal turned those rights over to Hammer Films. The novel was utilized as the basis for their production of CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF (1960).

If one is cognizant of THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS only by virtue of this film adaptation and has yet to become acquainted with the actual text, then one knows only a shadow and not the shape that casts the silhouette. The book presents the reader with a biographic record formed from an unsolicited defense document written by Aymar Galliez during the court martial of Bertrand Caillet. The novel details the declining trajectory of Bertrand, the illegitimate child of a simple country girl and a priest who is a descendent from a degenerate, savage bloodline of the Pitamonts. This downward spiral circumscribes Bertrand's stigmatized birth on Christmas Eve, complete with hair on his palms and eyebrows joined together across the nose; his troubled adolescence with episodes of violent waking dreams; his budding sexuality which exacerbates his lupine nature; his flight to Paris, a city under siege, where within the turmoil Bertrand is free to indulge in his animalistic needs; his affair in which his mistress allows him to feed on her blood as it appeases her own bestial sexuality; his court martial for attacking a fellow officer; finally, his debasement in the asylum where he is confined. Within this narrative schematic Relis is able to explore the compulsions of his characters in a way that any film even today could dare not attempt. Witness this passage, the aftermath of Bertrand's murder of his childhood friend:

"At every moment the light increased and the business of burying his old playmate became more gruesome. The stiffened body was hard to manage. The knapsack was in the way. He removed it. A good idea, he thought to himself. There will be things in there I'll need. He made a hasty examination of the contents. Food, linen, and tucked away, a billfold with money in it.

He had a sudden notion to dump out the bread and wine and old meat in the knapsack and pack in a limb or two of the dead body. The idea so revolted him that he nearly retched. 'Where do such ideas come to me from?' he exclaimed in horror."

The author makes it clear that Bertrand cannot be redeemed or rehabilitated, just as the society he lives in cannot renounce its own savagery and cruelty cloaked in righteous motives. This is probably the most daring and controversial conceit of this book.

If THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS is not as well known today as DRACULA or FRANKENSTEIN it is perhaps because the novel has not accrued the metaphoric malleability that would enable it to resonate in the collective psyche as a modern myth. The lycanthrope has been subsumed by the dual personality, popularized in DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, as more than one cultural observer has noted. Thus, the psychopath and the serial killer are the natural heirs to the domain of the werewolf. Yet, as a work of supernatural horror THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS, as all good fiction, allows the reader to suspend disbelief and ask if such things can be. That ultimately is meritorious enough for recommendation.

THE WEREWOLF OF PARIS

By

GUY ENDORE

Do you believe in devils and monsters? Do you believe that men can turn into wolves? Do you believe in the supernatural?

Most people would answer: "No."

But here is the strange and horrible story of a Frenchman, Sergeant Bertrand Caillet, and here is the evidence that he was a werewolf. You can believe it or not.

All the signs of a werewolf which are mentioned in old witch's tales were present in the life of this strange Frenchman. His mother was a young serving girl from the country who was raped by a priest. He was born on Christmas eve. His eyebrows were full and grew together over the bridge of his nose. He had fine, sharp, interlocking teeth, with little spaces between them. Even as a baby, when there was a death in the family, young Bertrand would howl uncontrollably, like a moonstruck dog baying on a lonely farm. And hair grew on the palms of his hands.

The horrible life, and the horrible death of Bertrand Caillet are told in this book. It is not a pretty story. And you may not believe it. You will be more comfortable if you don't.

TRIANGLE BOOKS

14 West 49th Street, New York 20, N. Y.

THE RETURN of THE MONSTER

Chapter 5

Story by John Skerchock
Art by Scott Pensak



Hitler screwed the whole thing up, thought Mallory. He took a good, sound idea and turned it into a nightmare

Mallory turned a curve in the roadway while cursing at the miserable storm. He had read the reports and was not happy. The project was not going as planned. He had to find out what the problem was. He rounded another curve and cursed the politicians for screwing up.

Eugenics was a term used in the United States almost a century ago. Back then the intellectual elite feared the dumbing down of America by the influx of so many immigrants. The national heritage had to be protected. America had to be the smartest county in the world. So eugenics came along

Eugenics was a way of purifying the race People who were retarded or just slow were sterilized. Many were sterilized against their will Children in orphanages were victims. Children with only one parent fell victim. Inmates in asylums were put to the knife. The whole idea was sanctioned by the United States Supreme Court

The fear of an impure race was so real that Hollywood even made movies about eugenics. First there were the silent films then the early talkies. Who knows where it would have gone had Hitler not gone ape shit and turned the whole damn thing into genocide?

It was so easy in the early days. People were told they had a bad seed and it had to be cut out. Courts allowed it. Many judges signed documents without even seeing the victims. Victims, yes, thought Mallory, that's what they would be called today. Back then they were diseased products of an unstable civilization.

Maybe the plan worked too well because involuntary sterilization's were outlawed in the 1970s. Mallory's own father took the fall for that. The government that had supported him for so long had turned its back on him. They left him to hang alone. A life's work was completely shattered. But they had been all for it when he made the proposal: lobotomized first then sterilize. It was too good for the victims wouldn't be able to complain about what had happened. But then someone got cold feet. Someone went public and Mallory's father went down. That will never happen again, he swore.

Mallory cursed as he rounded another curve in the downpour. He had the whole thing set on track again. The project would be better than ever. America would be great again, and now this happens.

Oberman came to them for support. He had gold, lots of it. He found it in the Yukon so long ago and kept it hidden. He used it to climb the obstacles that confronted him. He found it in the Yukon so long ago and kept it hidden. He used it to climb the obstacles that confronted him. He found the right people to put him in touch with Mallory and his agency. A few genetic tests confirmed his story or at least part of it. Now the results of those tests and samples were missing Part of a government clean up? Then why wasn't he told about it?

Oberman offered to use his wealth to further Mallory's goals. He promised to make the race pure again. He said things they wanted to hear. He made promises. Instead, the bodies were piling up. Not one of the two hundred homeless people survived any of the testing. Sooner or later someone would notice the disappearances.

"Damn mountain," Mallory said aloud

as his car began to climb the steep, twisting road. The rain was incredible. It beat down on his car with such force that he thought the windshield would brake. He passed a bar then rounded a few more curves and saw the house on top of the mountain. It looked like a castle.

Lightning struck behind the house. Mallory blinked. Lightning struck again a little closer. "Frankenstein's castle," said Mallory as he pulled into the driveway.

The bar was packed tonight. Gary was pleased. The fierce storm caused the workers to leave their job early for fear of power outages. But they couldn't resist stopping at the bar to down a few. Those few turned into many as the crowd had no desire to go back out into the thunder and heavy rain.

Gary was busy in the kitchen while Stevie was working the bar. They made a good team. Gary always thought that Steve got a bad break. He was always an easy target. Someone had taken advantage of him all those years ago, screwing with his head. Now Steve lives his life in his childhood reading comic books and talking about monster movies.

The bell rang and Gary pulled two more pizzas out of the oven. Their aroma was like heaven to him, and cash in the bank.

At the bar the crowd was having a good time Some of the men talked about the tragic accident that killed their foreman Jimmy Kravelk. Others talked about all the recent overtime they'd been getting. Steve tried to listen to it all, but he was busy pouring the beer and shuddering with each clap of thunder.

"Two more Buds, Steve," yelled Hank Billig.

"Okay." Steve went to the cooler but he was out of Budweiser. "I'll be back. I need to refill the cooler."

Steve moved from behind the bar and went to the basement. He descended the creaky wooden steps slowly. The basement wasn't lighted very well. Gary told him that the wiring dated back to when the bar was built and he didn't have the money to update it.

A single sixty watt bulb hanging from a cord in the center of the room was all Steve had to see by. He went to one corner where the cases of beer were kept and picked up two that were marked Budweiser. The basement was cool and damp, but the beer would still be relatively warm. Steve would ask Hank if he wanted some other beer instead.

As he turned to go back up the stairs, the top case slipped and fell against the stone wall. Steve bent down to pick it up. That's when he heard the noise.

"Who's there?" he asked, but he didn't hear anything. He shook his head. As he climbed the first step he heard it again. It was the sound of chains rattling.

"Who's there?"

"Help me." A woman's voice, Steve thought.

"Where are you?"

"I'm in here. Help me." The voice sounded hollow and haunting. Realization came over Steve and he remembered the stories the old people used to tell about the bar before Gary owned it. Steve quickly ran up the steps and into Gary

"Steve, what were you doing down there?"

"I had to get more beer. We didn't have anymore Bud in the cooler."

Gary looked at him suspiciously then nodded. "Okay, my fault. I forgot to restock when I opened."

Steve carried the cases behind the bar and started unpacking them. Gary followed and started filling drink orders while the pizzas baked.

"You know," said Steve

"Know what?" asked Gary.

"This place really is haunted."

Gary felt a prickling up his spine. His face went flush. Then the laughter at the bar broke the spell.

"Yeah, Steve," said Danny Groth, "the Bogeyman is outside waiting for you."

Steve ignored him. "No, Gary, I heard her."



Danny and the others started to laugh. Gary shook his head. "Okay, Steve, we'll talk about it later."

Steve emptied the bottles into the cooler. Both cases were empty. Then Steve looked at Gary. "This is like the Dr. Skull Nightmare Show."

"What?"

"Remember when we used to watch Dr. Skull Saturday nights when he showed those monster movies?"

"Yeah," Gary felt himself turning red from embarrassment while Danny and his crew began to snigger.

"Well Dr. Skull used to have a female ghost haunt his dungeon. Now we got one too."

Danny broke out laughing as Gary took his money and tried to make change.

"Only ours has chains," said Steve as he walked back into the kitchen. Gary

slammed the change down on the counter and followed him.

Steve was reaching for a can of root beer soda when Gary caught his arm

"What are you talking about, Steve?"

"Ouch, you're squeezing too hard." Gary released his grip.

"I was downstairs and I heard chains and a woman's voice. I looked around, but no one was there. That's when I knew the place was haunted. Neat, huh?"

Gary rolled his eyes. "Okay, Steve, promise me you won't go down there again unless I'm with you."

Steve looked into Gary's eyes. "Gary, she won't hurt me. She didn't sound menacing."

"Steve, you know what the doctors say about you hallucinating?"

"B-but I take my medication. Honest! Look-" he reached into his pocket and pulled out a brown prescription bottle. "Look, see, I take my pills."

"Okay, Steve, but I'm just worried about the customers talking. I don't want anything to happen. Do you understand?"

Steve stared intently into Gary's eyes and nodded slowly. "Sure, Gary, I understand. You're trying to help. I won't get you into trouble."

"Good. Thanks, Steve." Gary released his arm. "Now go help those people out. We have a thirsty crowd tonight."

Gary smiled and Steve smiled back. Then he put down his can of soda and went back to tending bar. Gary wiped sweat from his forehead.



The crowd slowly left the bar as the storm lessened in intensity. By ten all was quiet. The rain had died down, and only a fine mist remained. Fog was now forming as the air warmed up to cover the cold, damp ground.

Gary said goodnight to Steve as one of the patrons volunteered to take Steve home rather than let him ride his bicycle in the rain. Gary was glad of that. Gary didn't often admit it, but Stevie was the closest thing to a friend that he had.

As the lights dimmed in the bar, a familiar black limousine pulled up to the door. A large figure got out.

Gary was waiting with the pizza and six pack sitting on the bar.

The large man looked down at Gary and put a fifty on the bar. Gary just stared at him.

"Any news?"

"Nothing. All they talked about was

Jimmy's crash."

Oberman laughed.

"Why?" asked Gary.

Oberman became silent and peered down at Gary, piercing him with his gaze. "Don't you *ever* question me."

"But-he-I mean I grew up with the guy."

Oberman slammed the six pack down on the bar rupturing two of the cans.

"Boy, the time is almost at hand. You had better know what side you are on. Destiny waits for no man," he said, then his gaze turned to the mirror behind the bar "Or monster." He picked up the damaged six pack and, with the pizza box in his other hand, stormed out of the bar.

Gary waited until he heard the limo drive off before locking the door and turning out the last light.

Across the street from the bar, near the edge of the woods, a dark figure stood watching. When the limousine was out of sight around a turn, the figure lit a match and brought it to the tip of a cigarette The figure inhaled deeply then blew out the match with a long slow breath of smoke.

BE HERE *for* THE RETURN of THE MONSTER Chapter 6 in CoF #29!



BELA LUGOSI and the MONOGRAM NINE

by Alan Warren

Bela Lugosi and Monogram films were made for each other. It's a classic example of synchronicity: if Lugosi's career hadn't slipped when it did, and if Monogram hadn't started up Banner Productions when it did, the two might never have gotten together. But they did, and the result was nine of the most delirious, logic-defying *films maudits* ever produced. Even today, more than fifty years since their release, they have their loyal adherents, mostly Lugosi fans, convinced that Bela never made a bad picture. And in a way that's true, because Lugosi's mere presence makes these films watchable; his charisma was such that even in a piece of absolute drek like *The Ape Man* Lugosi seems to be giving it his all. And that, in the words of Lugosiphile Arthur Lennigh, "is enough." Tom Weaver has written a delightful account of these films, along with those of PRC and Republic, *Poverty Row Horrors*, and this is warmly recommended.

Monogram actually released its first film in 1924 under the Rayart logo, they became Syndicate Film Exchange in 1928, then Monogram Pictures in 1931. Monogram's output during the 30s was extensive; some of their films, such as *The 13th Guest* (1932), with Ginger Rogers, were quite good. Others, such as *The Sphinx* (1933), with Lionel Atwill, did not deliver on their initial premise (a murder committed by a well-spoken man who then turns out to be a deaf-mute). *Phantom Killer* (1942), a remake, was actually an improvement on the original, with John Hamilton (Perry White in the old Superman TV series) in the Atwill role.

Around this time (1935), Bela Lugosi made his first Monogram film - - *The Mysterious Mr. Wong*, an attempt to cash in on MGM's expensive *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, which had featured Lugosi's *bête noire*, Boris Karloff, in the title role. Based on Harry Stephen Keeler's novel *The Twelve Coins of Confucius*, *Mr. Wong* was a delightfully absurd enterprise, notable mainly for Lugosi's overplayed madman (a role originally intended for Lionel Atwill) and Wallace Ford's xenophobic newspaperman. (Ford would return to face Lugosi in *The Ape Man*). It was directed by William Nigh, who had directed Lon Chaney, Sr. in *Mr. Wu* (1927) in better days, but was now down on his luck.



The plot concerned the legendary twelve coins of Confucius; according to the legend, whoever owns the coins rules the Chinese province of Keelat. In San Francisco's Chinatown Mr. Wong (Lugosi) commits wholesale murder to

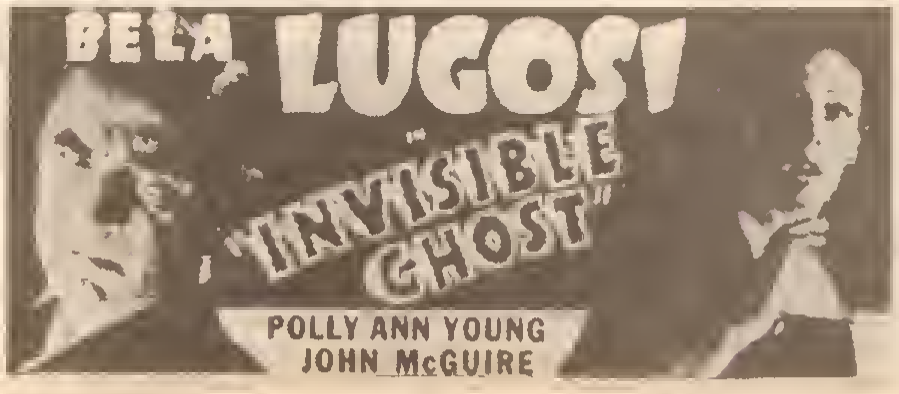
gain eleven of the coins; he needs only one more. Wong leads a double life: as Li See, an herb dealer, he keeps abreast of goings-on in Chinatown. (Lugosi looks absurd in this get-up, but that's part of the film's charm, such as it is.)

Jason Barton (Wallace Ford), a newspaper reporter, investigates the killings. He finds a handwritten note beside one of the bodies and takes it to a scholar for translation, unknowingly marking himself for death by Mr. Wong. By chance, a sacred coin falls into Barton's booth while he is eating at a restaurant in Chinatown. He and Peg (Arline Judge) subsequently fall into the clutches of Mr. Wong, who sentences them to be tortured, but unwisely leaves them locked in a room with a functioning telephone. Jason manages to get out a call for help. The police arrive and shoot Mr. Wong to death.

Mr. Wong is an amusing time capsule. It's great fun to see Lugosi doing a Chinese impersonation (complete with Hungarian accent), and the film itself is full of hokey fun, though it virtually defines the term "politically incorrect". It's obviously a steal from Sax Rohmer's Fu Manchu, with Lugosi as a diabolical mastermind ("A few hours with the rats will make him speak the truth," he cavalierly remarks when dealing with a subordinate), and it's loaded with ethnic jibes: One copy, discovering several dead Chinese, remarks, "Better dead ones than live ones." It obviously could not compete with *Mask of Fu Manchu* on any level: even its torture scenes are decidedly economical - - rather than Karloff's elaborate torture of the bells, Mr. Wong uses a bamboo nail file to try to force the truth out of Peg. Perhaps Mr. Wong was on a economy drive.

Although *Mr. Wong* was technically Lugosi's first Monogram film it's usually not included among the "Monogram nine", a specific cycle of films produced between 1941 and 1944. In one of the ironies that would hound Lugosi throughout his career, Karloff actually got there first, and got out while the getting was good. Karloff, in the wake of Hollywood's self-imposed ban on horror films (1937-1939), signed on with Monogram for a series of "Mr. Wong" films. This character, a sort of poor man's Charlie Chan, was featured in a series of stories published in the *Saturday Evening Post* by Hugh Wiley and had no connection whatever with Monogram's previous Mr. Wong. By 1940 horror films were back in vogue, and Monogram, taking full advantage of this fact, dropped Karloff from the final Mr. Wong film due on his contract - - Charlie Chan's number one son Keye Luke took the part - - and put him in a bona fide horror film instead: *The Ape*, directed by William Nigh. *The Ape* featured Karloff donning an ape suit and running around killing people in order to extract a spinal fluid. It was an unrecognizable remake of a 1934 Monogram film, *House of Mystery*. (The idea would be recycled in Lugosi's *The Ape Man*.) *The Ape* was a silly film, a harbinger of things to come, and Karloff quickly departed Monogram and got back into the fold at Universal and Columbia.

Enter Bela Lugosi. After the ignominy of being handed a supporting role in Universal's *Son of Frankenstein* at a salary of five hundred dollars a week (back in the days of *The Black Cat* and *The Raven* he was receiving double that), Lugosi signed with Monogram for a series of nine films to be produced by Sam Katzman's Banner Productions. Although the films obviously couldn't compete production-wise with Universal, at least Bela was being offered starring roles. As William K. Everson noted, the Monogram films "were all directed by







efficient journeyman directors, William Nigh, Wallace Fox, Phil Rosen and William Beaudine... And most of them contained dialogue which, even if not apparent in the 1940s, gives them an enjoyable smattering of humor today. And for all their shabbiness, they did present Lugosi with lead roles; roles unworthy of him true, but far more satisfying than the red-herring roles he was being forced into in films like *The* [sic] *Night Monster* (1942) and *One Body Too Many* (1944)."

Lugosi's first Monogram film was released in April, 1941. *Invisible Ghost* had a frankly incredible scenario, with Bela becoming hypnotized by the sight of his supposedly dead wife, who reappears like clockwork outside his window. (The title is inaccurate: she is neither invisible nor a ghost.) Whenever Charles Kessler (Lugosi) sees her he goes into a trance and strangles the first person near at hand. Other than this slight quirk, Kessler is a model citizen. Kessler's mental derangement is apparently a common ailment: When Paul Dickson asks a

psychiatrist if it's possible for a person to be perfectly normal most of the time, then, once a year, go completely insane for an hour or two, the doctor blandly remarks, "Yes, quite common."

Bizarre as this sounds, the screenplay gets even weirder. When Kessler murders the maid the unfortunate Ralph Dickson (John McGuire) is arrested for the crime. In short order, he's tried, convicted and executed (despite there having been other murders in the house). Just when the audience has come to expect they've seen the last of McGuire, he returns - - as Ralph's twin brother! (Since there's no earthly reason for this inexplicable plot development, presumably screenwriters Al and Helen Martin put it in there just to see if audiences were awake and paying attention.)

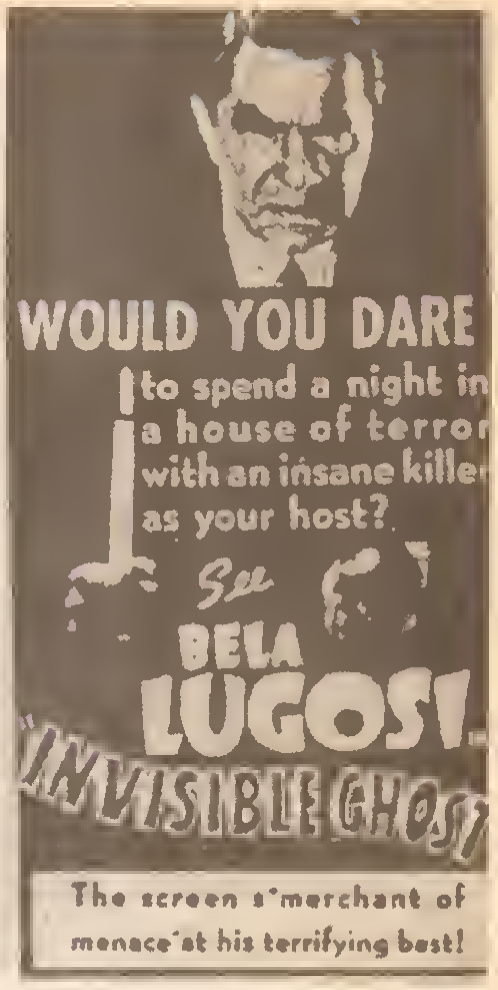
Monogram fans rate *Invisible Ghost* highly; the majority of them even see it as the best of the Lugosi series, probably because for once Lugosi gets to play a benevolent role (at least when he's not strangling someone) For most of the film he's affable, even charming: when his cook threatens to leave because of all the murders taking place, Lugosi turns on the charm to convince her to stay, when she offers to make apple pie Lugosi's face lights up as he exclaims, "Apple pie!" As none of this is terribly important to the plot, it's presumably an attempt to develop Lugosi's characterization, such as it is.

Invisible Ghost was directed by Joseph H Lewis, a recognized auteur whose *films noirs Gun Crazy* (1949) and *The Big Combo* (1955) are highly regarded. He had little enough to work with in this film, but does the best he can under the circumstances. (Some shots don't match, and in one scene there's a cut in the middle of a pan, but this is par for the course for Monogram.)

The film's cast is a definite asset. Polly Ann Young, Loretta's sister, play Bela's daughter, and John McGuire (the innocent man in *Stranger on the Third Floor*) enacts a dual role acceptably. Clarence Muse, once considered for the role of Sam in *Casablanca*, plays Kessler's butler, Evans. And Ottola Nesmith has a small role as the gardener's wife Years later, Nesmith would become a "horror hostess" on TV in the Los Angeles area, she also played the hideous old hag Eula Lee Blassenville in "Pigeons from Hell", the most frightening episode of Boris Karloff's TV series *Thriller*

William K. Everson called *Invisible Ghost* "by far the best" of Lugosi's Monogram films, saying that it "was interesting and serious beginning to the Katzman series." Not everyone thinks highly of *Invisible Ghost*. Phil Hardy, in his *Encyclopedia of Horror Movies*, called it "An awful film", adding that "Even Lewis, to judge by the number of closeups of staring eyes, appears to have given up and gone home."

Spooks Run Wild (1941) paired Bela with the East Side Kids. Amazingly enough, the screenplay was co-written by Carl Foreman, later an Oscar-winner for *Bridge on the River Kwai* (Foreman was under personal contract to Huntz Hall at the time; according to Richard Bojarski's *The Films of Bela Lugosi*, Foreman was paid twenty-five dollars for the story and $200 for his collaboration on the screenplay). The film looks as shoddy and threadbare as anything Monogram ever turned out. The plot involves the East Side Kids, headed by Leo Gorcey and Huntz Hall, being sent to camp. While there they hear that the police are hunting for the Monster Killer, a maniac known to be in the area. The boys wind up in a mysterious mansion tenanted by a mysterious figure in a cloak (Lugosi) and his dwarf assistant (Angelo Rossitto), whom Gorcey insensitively refers to as a "termite". A Van Helsing-like figure named Von Grosch (Dennis Moore, the hero of *The Mummy's Curse*) is on the trail of the Monster, and his search leads him to the mansion Of course, the maniac is Von Grosch himself; Lugosi is just a harmless magician who has rented the house in order to practice his new illusions. Most of the film consists of the East Side Kids running around the mansion; the film repeats the gag from *The Ghost Breakers* of a man running amok in a suit of armor. Nothing of any note happens until the end, when Gorcey subdues the Monster, who appears to be a sex maniac (though this isn't spelled out).





The film makes poor use of Lugosi, though it isn't a total disaster: at least he's the center of attention throughout, unlike his insignificant role in the later *Ghosts on the Loose*. He and Rossitto (who had appeared in *Seven Footprints to Satan* and

Freaks) make an effective team: they would be seen again in *The Corpse Vanishes* and *Scared to Death*. There's little suspense: it's painfully obvious from the beginning that Lugosi is only a red herring and not the Monster Killer. There's also some enjoyable "small town" atmosphere, and the sets are quite acceptable. (Some shots of Lugosi wandering around the catacombs could almost be mistaken for outtakes from *Dracula*.) The film was Huntz Hall's second as a member of the East Side Kids, and the first to feature him prominently. Another of the Kids, Donald Haines, "Skinny", died in World War II shortly after the film was made.

Black Dragons (1942) followed. Released in March, just three months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, this once-topical melodrama has dated more noticeably than other Lugosi vehicles. It begins with a group of industrialists and businessmen discussing the war at a dinner party. It is apparent that some of them are fifth columnists. Dr. Saunders (George Pembroke) has a visitor: a mysterious Monsieur Colomb (Lugosi). He tells Saunders that he is very sick. The doctor points out the Colomb does not appear to be in danger of dying. Colomb replies: "All men are in danger of dying. The important question is when." Colomb murders one of Saunders' dinner guests in a taxi; when the cab arrives at its destination it's empty. The dead man's body is later found on the steps of the Japanese Embassy. FBI agent Dick Martin (Clayton Moore, later to find fame as The Lone Ranger) is assigned to the case. He questions Colomb, who is now living at the Saunders home: when he points out that four men who came to dinner there were found dead under mysterious circumstances, Colomb clucks, "Possible coincidence." The finger of suspicion falls on Colomb; Martin's men follow him in his taxi and try to arrest him, but when they pull the cab over he has disappeared. By now there is only one survivor of the dinner party: Hanlin (Robert Frazer, co-star of Lugosi's *White Zombie*). When Martin asks him if he isn't frightened, being the last of the survivors, Hanlin snorts, "A busy man has very little time to indulge in feminine emotions." Naturally, Hanlin is Colomb's next victim, though he does manage to shoot Colomb before he expires.

The strange story is finally unraveled via flashbacks: the supposed American businessmen were actually Japanese members of the Black Dragon society who underwent plastic surgery performed by Dr. Melcher (Lugosi) and took the place of American businessmen killed while abroad. Melcher himself was then imprisoned: unknown to the Japanese, he changed places with the prisoner in his cell (after performing plastic surgery to resemble him) and then escaped to rack down the Back Dragons in America. As for Saunders, he bas been left looking like a monster; as Colomb dies he laughs: "And you must go on - - *living*." (Arthur Lennig's recounting of the plot in *The Count* is so riddled with errors it could qualify as a true or false quiz - - one of the perils of pre-VCR film research.)

For most of its length, *Black Dragons* is an acceptable wartime melodrama with an outlandish but original plotline. (It was used, sans credit, for "The Hundred Days of the Dragon", and episode of TV's *The Outer Limits*, 22 years later.) It moves quickly and there's plenty of action, until the incredible convolutions at the end render it an indigestible mass, leaving all sorts of unanswered questions. (Why don't the Japanese businessmen recognize Melcher, since his elaborate "plastic surgery" amounted to shaving his beard? Why doesn't the heroine, who is actually an FBI operative, reveal this to Dick Martin?)

Even in a semi-sympathetic role, Lugosi couldn't escape typecasting, since he murders people left and right. The heroine (Joan Barclay) seems to be simultaneously repelled and attracted to him: when she sees a figure outside her window she runs straight into his arms. Yet at another point she snipes of his appearance, "Handsome devil, isn't he?" Throughout, Colomb is presented as a mysterious, even charismatic figure, though his penchant for exiting cabs unseen remains unexplained.

Black Dragons has few defenders. Phil



Hardy called it "mainly a half-baked mess of screams, shadows and murkily lurking figures." Tom Weaver opined: "As plotty and convoluted as it is vague and confused, *Black Dragons* remains a minor landmark in the history of incoherent cinema."

The Corpse Vanishes (1942), fourth in the series, is usually regarded as one of the best. Unlike *Black Dragons* and *Bowery at Midnight*, which are essentially crime melodramas with horror elements, this one eschews the crime genre entirely. The basic elements of its plot became well known to horror fans: Brides are mysteriously dying at the altar; their bodies are then stolen. The corpse thief is Dr. Lorenz (Lugosi), who is sending orchids with a poisonous scent to the brides; he then uses a fluid extracted from the girls' necks to revivify his wife, the Countess (Elizabeth Russell), a young woman whose veins and heart are those of someone 70-80 years old. These injections restore the Countess' youth and beauty. Pat Hunter (Luana Walters), a reporter, sets out to interview Lorenz, who selects her as his next victim. When



Fagah (Minerva Urecal) discovers that Lorenz had caused the deaths of her sons Toby (Angelo Rossitto, billed as "Angelo") and Angel (Frank Moran) she stabs the doctor and the Countess both to death. The brides are discovered to still be alive, kept in a cataleptic state. (Lorenz was also a hypnotist.)

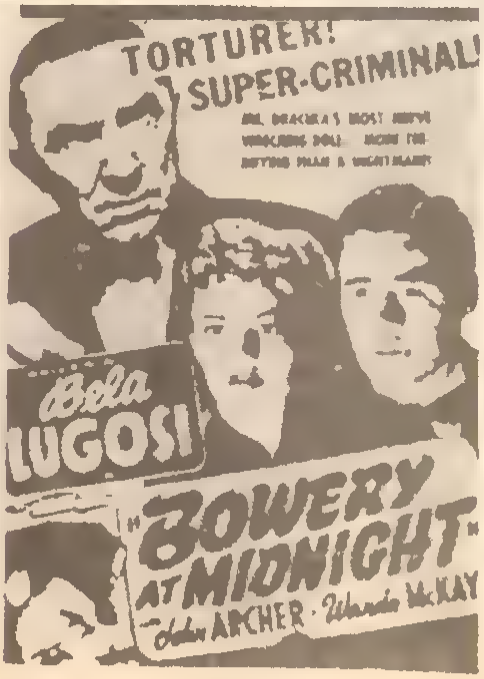
The Corpse Vanishes (known as *The Case of the Missing Brides* in England) is, as William K. Everson notes, "Quite a grim little number." Just as *Black Dragons*' plot was recycled, so was *Corpse Vanishes*' storyline. It was used in *Voodoo Man*, *Corruption*, *The Black Sleep*, and many others, and received its finest, most poetic treatment in Franju's classic *Les Yeux Sans Visage*. Later films may have handled the plotline more competently, but *The Corpse Vanishes* deserves some credit for introducing what would become a staple of horror films of the 50s and 60s.

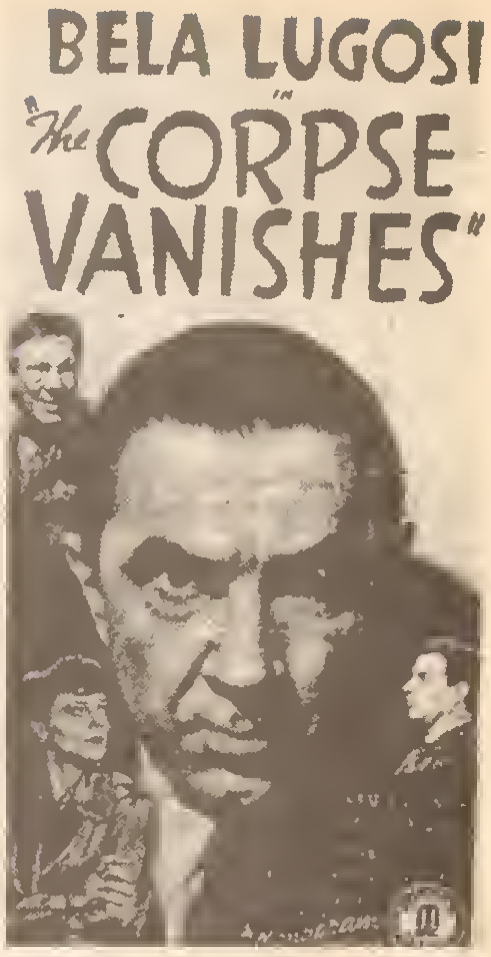
The film is one of the more respectable Monograms, since it doesn't get lost in subplots or leave loose ends dangling; its plot development is more linear than *Black Dragons*. Elizabeth Russell, a mainstay of the Val Lewton films (she played Simone Simon's sister in *Cat People*), makes her only appearance in a Monogram horror; as the Countess Lorenz, she is obliged to speak in a heavy Russian accent. Miss Russell remembers little of the film: "I hadn't worked in six months, so I went down there to Monogram. I took it because I hadn't worked in so long. I was free-lancing. It was between things. I had a coach for the Russian accent, I remember." She also remembered that she was reluctant to lie in a coffin, as specified by the script. "I thought it was bad luck. At that time I was interested in astrology. Maria [Montez] taught me about astrology."

The film, like all Monograms, does have its drawbacks. There are many clunker lines: "Now, wait a minute. Are you trying to tell me that this Professor Lorenz is a hypnotist *as well* as a horticulturist?" Pat's editor asks incredulously. There's also some unfunny comedy "relief" from Vince Barnett, as Pat's fellow reporter. (Serial addicts will recognize Tristram Coffin, star of *King of the Rocketmen*, as the hero, Dr. Foster.) There's also a protracted, wordless sequence in which Frank Moran, munching on a turkey leg, pursues Pat through some hidden passageways to the tune of Monogram's main "Mysterioso" theme, that seems designed to take up running time.

Not everyone likes *The Corpse Vanishes*. Arthur Lennig noted that "it combines a dull mystery with unconvincing science, while expecting the mere presence of Lugosi to evoke fear with no help from story, dialogue, or direction." And Phil Hardy called it "a lamentably shoddy piece of work." But William K. Everson thought it "the best of the series in terms of horror", adding that "it is an intense little film, with little time out for comedy or padding; Lugosi sleeps in a coffin for no apparent reason other than the chance to deliver a *Dracula*-like speech about death, and the laboratory scenes are relatively gripping."

Bowery at Midnight (1942) is sometimes mistakenly referred to as a Bowery Boys comedy. It actually resembles Lugosi's British chiller, *The Human Monster* (also known as *Dark Eyes of London*). In that Bela played Dr. Orloff as well as Professor Dearborn, who runs a home for the blind. In *Bowery*, Bela plays what might generously be termed a dual role: as Professor Brenner, a university professor, and Karl Wagner, who runs the Friendly mission in New York's Bowery district.





Wagner is also a homicidal maniac who organizes elaborate crimes and then leaves the corpse of one of his own gang members at the scene.

The fun begins almost immediately with an establishing shot of the university where Brenner teaches: the University of California at Berkeley, which means he must have had a hell of a commute each morning! There's some novelty value in seeing Bela segue from sedate professor, complete with *pince-nez*, to snarling crime lord. And there's an eerie *frisson* in hearing Tom Neal (star of Edgar Ulmer's classic *Detour*), as ice-cold killer Frankie Mills, describe murdering someone in cold blood, since Neal in real life killed his wife and spent several years in prison. And just as in *The Ape Man*, Lugosi has a miniature TV set on which he monitors the activities of his gang members. (George Burns must have bought the set from him, since he had a similar one on the old Burns and Allen TV show.)

Some fans complain that *Bowery* is more of a crime melodrama than a horror film. Another, more pertinent, criticism is that

it has at least three plots all going at once. If one can overlook these faults it's an agreeable little film with some enjoyably seedy skid row atmosphere, as well as amusing cameos by Pat Costello (Lou's brother) as a Bowery denizen, and Bernard Gorcey (Leo's father, "Louie Dumbrowski" in the Bowery Boys films) as a tailor. And for the most part, it's competently acted by Tom Neal, John Archer, and Monogram mainstay Dave O'Brien. There's also a rather sinister pay-off at the end, when Brenner/Wagner is escaping from the cops: he' s set upon by his own victims, raised from the dead by Doc Brooks (Lew Kelly). Richard Bojarski, in *The Films of Bela Lugosi*, rather over enthusiastically wrote: "Worthy of mention was an ending hair-raising enough to give Val Lewton's fright films a run for their money."

Other critics have given *Bowery at Midnight* its due. Phil Hardy said of it: "Although no masterpiece, this is a distinct cut above the average of Lugosi's later films, no doubt because it was largely cribbed from his earlier *Dark Eyes of London*... It may not make too much sense, but it does have flashes of imagination." Tom Weaver noted that "[i]n standard Monogram fashion, the many questions that viewers might ask themselves about *Bowery at Midnight*'s garbled plot remain stubbornly unanswerable, but the fun is in the not-bad cast, lively pace, seedy flavor and unintentionally humorous moments."

Bela's next Monogram outing, *The Ape Man* (1943), is probably his most embarrassing hour. As the film begins Dr. James Brewster (Lugosi) has mysteriously disappeared Throughout the film a mysterious character named Zippo (Ralph Littlefield) appears at odd moments, advising certain characters and warning others This rather Pirandelloish device has an embarrassing payoff at the film's end.

In experimenting upon himself, Brewster has turned into a simian creature. Actually, his allegedly frightening appearance consists of no more than a heavy beard and facial hair and a supposedly simian crouch. (He has also taken to sleeping with an ape in a cage.) In order to gain relief he must have spinal fluid, even though the relief is only temporary. Brewster and the ape go after victims, roaming the streets. ("Ape Man Runs Wild" a newspaper headline blares.) Brewster seems unperturbed by having to kill or by his bestial behavior ("I try to fight it with all my *vill* power," Bela intones). Dr. Randall (Henry Hall), the only one who can give him his needed injections, rebels, so with a supreme lack of logic, Brewster kills him as well.

Meanwhile, Jeff Carter (Wallace Ford) and Billie Mason (Louise Currie), two reporters hot on the Ape Man's trail, enter the Brewster home. The Ape Man carries off Billie, preparing to extract her spinal fluid, when the ape decides to break his back. The police, arriving late, shoot the ape. Jeff and Billie encounter Zippo seated in Jeff's car. When Jeff asks who he is, Zippo says, "Oh, I'm the author of the story. Screwy idea, wasn't it?"

The Ape Man is easily the most delirious, the most absurd, and in some ways the most delightful, of Bela's Monogram nine. At the same time, it's probably his most degrading role; although later films such as *Plan Nine from Outer Space* and *Scared to Death* were worse, he himself was never so humbled as he is here, loping around his laboratory in an absurd shuffle, and sleeping with an ape (played by Emil Van Horn, veteran Hollywood gorilla actor) He's supported by Minerva Urecal, playing his devoted sister Agatha. (In a touching example of brotherly love he strangles her nearly to death in one scene.) Urecal was the victim of one of the most unflattering put-downs of all time when Calvin Beck described her in *Heroes of Horrors* as "that hatchet-faced old barnacle of the Z films." As a ghost-hunter, she acts up a storm, hamming away in one scene as she recounts famous ghosts she's known. Wallace Ford, Lugosi's nemesis in *Night of Terror* and *The Mysterious Mr. Wong*, is his usual competent self, and Louise Currie, soon to be seen in *Voodoo Man*, is along for the ride.

Arthur Lennig wasn't amused by *The Ape Man*. "Although the competition is keen," he noted, "it is probably his worst Monogram picture... [t]he script is



incredibly inept, and Lugosi is simply lost in the stupidity of it all." William K. Everson, on the other hand, called it "one of the more tolerable and even mildly rewarding of the Monogram Lugosis." Don Liefert wrote that "No actor should have been subjected to the indignities heaped upon Lugosi in this role. Ludicrous makeup (which amounted to no more than crepe hair), poor lighting, and static pacing added up to the Hungarian's most demeaning film role. Yet considering all that was working against him, Lugosi played the role like the seasoned professional that he was." This classic review appeared in *The Daily News*: "Monogram's writer didn't have to wipe the dust from Bela Lugosi's *The Ape Man*: he had to rake the mould off."

Bela's next film, *Ghosts on the Loose* (1943), is a distinct disappointment, even for Monogram addicts. It reunites Lugosi and the Bowery Boys, but lacks *Spooks*

Run Wild's haunted house and ghostly atmosphere. Despite its title, and a few moments involving portraits with eye-holes and the like, *Ghosts* simply isn't a horror film: the mere presence of Lugosi is the only reason it's usually listed as one. Absolutely nothing happens beyond some sliding wall panels, secret passageways and a mysteriously disappearing (and reappearing) printing press, used to print Nazi propaganda. (Like *Black Dragons*, it's a wartime piece.) The film wastes Lugosi as a Nazi; even *Spooks run Wild* made better use of the actor: here he's only in a couple of scenes, along with Frank Moran and Minerva Urecal. Even more damagingly, he's billed fourth, behind Bobby Jordan. (At least in *Spooks Run Wild* he got top billing.)

Ghosts is a letdown on every conceivable level. Its only claim to fame is a very young Ava Gardner as Huntz Hall's sister (!) There's also an amusing scene in which Glimpy (Hall) sweeps dust under a cobweb. The film itself looks at least ten years older than its actual production date, and the scriptwriting is slipshod, even for Monogram: when a police patrol car is ordered, via radio, to "return to 322 Elm Street" one cop says to the other: "That's where we just came from." There's also an in-joke, a dig at the film's producer, when Glimpy worries that his sister's wedding ceremony will be interrupted by "the Katzman moh."

Voodoo Man (1944) seems to be a belated attempt by Monogram to make up for the indignities suffered by Lugosi in *The Ape Man*. Here he plays Dr. Marlowe, devoted to his deceased wife and determined to bring her back from the dead via the all-powerful voodoo god Ramboona. "Ramboona never fails" is the constant refrain heard during the voodoo rites.

The film begins with Alice (Terry Walker) pulling into a gas station in the remote countryside. The owner is Nicholas (George Zucco), a bald-pated fellow with a mysterious gleam in his eye. He makes a phone call, and soon enough two confederates, Toby (John Carradine) and Grego (Pat McKee), put up a DETOUR sign to lure the girl away. Some kind of strange gadget causes her motor to stall, and the two drag the girl off. She is the third female to vanish from lonely Laurel Road.

Screenwriter Ralph Dawson (Tod Andrews) just happens to be on Laurel Road when his car runs out of gas. Stella (Louise Currie) gives him a ride; she just happens to be the sister of Ralph's fiancée Betty. (Such coincidences happen pretty frequently in Monogram films.) Toby and Grego snatch Stella away. They take her to the hidden lair of Dr. Marlowe. He is attempting to transfer the minds of young girls into the body of his wife Evelyn (Ellen Hall). A bizarre ritual ensues, with Nicholas wearing war-paint and Toby and Grego beating voodoo drums. "Remember, Ramboona never fails," Nicholas reminds Marlowe.

Stella wanders away, but is lured back by a mystical chant. Soon Marlowe is after Betty (Wanda McKay) as well. When the sheriff arrives with his men Marlowe is shot and the girls, all in a trance-like state, awaken. When Ralph turns in his new script *The Voodoo Man* to his boss, the executive asks who can play the title role. "Say, why don't you get that actor - - uh, Bela Lugosi?" Ralph asks. "It's right up his alley."

Voodoo Man is notorious among film buffs for the embarrassing position the film puts Carradine and Zucco in. Although Carradine made many worse films, this may well be his most demeaning role: as the dim-witted Toby, he is obliged to shuffle, his hands dangling at his sides, intoning moronically, "You're a pretty one" as he gazes, Lennie-like, at Marlowe's kidnapped voodoo brides. Zucco, too, is saddled with an embarrassing role: as Nicholas, filling station proprietor and part-time voodoo chieftain, he looks ridiculous wearing voodoo war-paint and ceremonial robes and chanting "Ramboona never fails!" (Sometimes "Ramboona" comes out "Ramona" or even "Bomboona".)

As if to make up for the professional slight that *The Ape Man* constituted, Lugosi by contrast has one of his best roles in *Voodoo Man*. As Marlowe, he is convincingly dedicated to his wife'





alternately sinister and touching, he is dignified throughout, unlike Carradine and Zucco. It's one of Lugosi's best 40s performances, and the beard he sports makes him look handsome and aristocratic, quite unlike the silly facial hair he was forced to wear in *The Ape Man*.

William K. Everson thoroughly enjoyed *Voodoo Man*, noting that "at least some of its humor was intentional" He also noted that Zucco's "cultured tones make him an unlikely candidate for the gas-station attendant job that seems to be his main source of income. . ." At the end, Everson notes, "Zucco and Carradine emerge quite unscathed, Zucco hopefully to transfer his gas station to a less lonely stretch of road and perhaps make a go of it." Arthur Lennig noted that "Although the script has its absurdities, and is by no means horrifying, it does tell a fairly entertaining story. But more than the story, it is Lugosi who carries the film. He brings to it his demonic intensity and yet also his human warmth, so that the performance is curiously powerful and indeed even touching... Unlike most of Lugosi's roles, this part allowed him to be strong and in control but also to be humbled enough by his past failures to be slightly doubtful that he will ever succeed. Lugosi also brings to the part of human warmth, a



compassion for his wife and even, in a sense, for his victims that provides more than the usual one-dimensional quality." Don Liefert was less impressed, noting that "Zucco, buried under voodoo war paint through most of the film is confined to mumbling incoherent voodoo chants." although he opined that the film was "director William Beaudine's finest contribution to the horror genre." Donald C. Willis noted that "Zucco, chanting and occasionally glancing up at the camera, looks as if he's as embarrassed as Carradine *should* have been."

Return of the Ape Man (1944), which followed, is arguably the best of Bela's Monogram nine. It begins with Professor Dexter (Lugosi) and Professor Gilmore (John Carradine) bringing a tramp back to life after being in a state of suspended animation. Dexter is certain they can do the same with someone kept in ice for thousands of years. Soon after, they are in the far North standing in front of a phony-looking rear projection screen depicting Arctic climes. When Gilmore displays qualms about the expedition Dexter glowers, "You go if you want to. I stay on." Lugosi in his parka bears an unfortunate resemblance to W.C. Fields in *The Fatal Glass of Beer*, and the Arctic backdrop is about as realistic as the rear-projected snow in that Fields classic. Although the odds are against it, they find a Neanderthal Man preserved in ice; they transport him back to America, where he remains in a block of ice. Although published stills suggest that the ice is actually cellophane (see photo above), in the film it is far less obvious. Using a blowtorch, Dexter speeds up the thawing process, and the Ape Man (Frank Moran) returns to life. Dexter decides to give it part of the brain of a 20th century man, just enough so that the ape man will obey the professor's orders. When Dexter attempts to use the brain of one of Gilmore's friends, the doctor turns on him. "Fool - - you'll pay for this," Dexter warns. Sure enough, he uses Gilmore's brain instead The ape man revives, then escapes from Dexter's lab; as he exits through a window his underwear can plainly be seen. He kills a policeman. Dexter, walking the streets in a tuxedo and carrying a blowtorch, finds him and herds him back to the lab

The ape man again escapes. He enters Gilmore's home and plays *Moonlight Sonata* on the piano, as Gilmore used to do, then strangles Gilmore's wife to death. He returns to Dexter's lab. "Did you kill somebody again?" the professor

asks. The police arrive; the ape man breaks out of his cell and kills Dexter. There's an elaborate chase climax before the ape man winds up back in the lab, where he inadvertently sets fire to the place, then winds up perishing in the flames.

Return of the Ape Man (the title is misleading, since it has no connection to *The Ape Man*) owes a debt to Edgar Rice Burroughs' novelette *The Resurrection of Jimber-Jaw*, which dealt with a Neanderthal man being brought back to life. (The theme was later dealt with in *Dinosaurus, Ice Man*, and *Eegah!*) It's an enjoyably preposterous sf yarn that climaxes with an unexpected volley of action that's far more ambitious than anything Monogram normally attempted. It's better made than Bela's others: a bit more care seems to have gone into its production. Acting-wise, Bela gives his standard mad doctor performance, but John Carradine is unfortunately subdued to the point of boredom in the role of Gilmore. In addition, one tends to root for Dexter: he's the villain, but Gilmore is such a caricature of the well-meaning liberal - - selfless, politically correct at all times, and with something of a martyr's complex - - that it's hard not to wish a swift end for his namby-pamby character. The ape man was supposedly played by George Zucco (the cast list credits both Zucco and Frank Moran in the role). Legend has it that Zucco claimed a sudden illness and ankled production after just a few days, and that his only appearance in the ape man suit was for a publicity photograph. (Although *Castle of Frankenstein* #24 claimed that he can be seen near the end of the film.) Whatever the explanation, the ape man's actions are startlingly incongruous: one minute he's playing *Moonlight Sonata*, the next he's strangling his wife to death. When Dexter asks why he killed her, the ape man replies: "Didn't mean to." Sure.

There are plenty of incongruities, but the film is fun nonetheless. Unimpressed, *Castle of Frankenstein* #24 noted that "Director Phil Rosen gets the least out of the usual grubby sets, holding each shot for at least twice its optimum length." Arthur Lennig observed that "The well performed confrontations between a devoted scientist and his wishy-washy associate full of middle-class values have a verve beyond the usual character conflicts in such quick films. The scriptwriters either let out their own resentments or else caught the real essence of Lugosi's dangerous charm... Although *Return of the Ape Man* was criticized for using the old formula of the mad scientist, it was better than many of Lugosi's other Monogram pictures." And Tom Weaver wrote: "While not on a par with the better B horror movies that were being made by major studios *Return of the Ape Man* has an almost professional look and plenty of action, setting it several steps above many of the Monogram Lugosis that preceded it. It's typical of Poor Bela's luck that Monogram seemed on the verge of finally getting the knack of horror moviemaking just as the horror cycle - - and his Monogram contract - - were expiring."



Return of the Ape Man concluded Bela's Monogram contract. The company went on to produce several more horror thriller, including *Face of Marble* (1946) with John Carradine, but Lugosi's commanding presence was missed. Although he would appear in quite a few more low budget horror opuses, including *Scared to Death* (1947), *Old Mother Riley Meets the Vampire* and *Bela Lugosi Meets a Brooklyn Gorilla* (both 1952), none would feature the bizarre quality (if quality is the word) of Monogram at its most characteristic.

As William K. Everson noted, "Quite obviously the entire Monogram Lugosi ouevre doesn't offer any rediscovered classics, but it is an amusing and interesting body of work." This is putting it mildly. Even today, Monogram has it boosters: they ignore the slipshod writing, inadequate sets, murky lighting and frequent lapses of logic, and concentrate on the esoteric, inexplicable and sometimes incoherent goings-on that made the studio the fun factory that it was. Monogram's more than slightly demented world of ape men, invisible ghosts, wild-running spooks, black dragons and vanishing corpses was unique. All of it came to sudden end in 1944, and the world is poorer, if saner, place without it. *In pace requiescat.*



The Return of the MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN™

by Donald F. Glut

My first real introduction to the Monster of Frankenstein was not in the famous Universal movies of the 1930s and 1940s, or in the original novel, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN, OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS. It was in a comic book - - issue number 19, dated summer 1952 - - of the unpretentiously titled FRANKENSTEIN from Feature Publications (AKA the Prize comics group).

There was no way I could then have imagined that someday I - - in collaboration with artist Brian Thomas, who would not be born for a couple years yet, and whom I would not meet until much later - - would be professionally involved with returning the title character of THE MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN (as FRANKENSTEIN was cover-designated for its last four issues) to his artificial life.

But first, some background ...

Horror comics were in vogue in those early Fifties days and already "grownups" were grumbling about the alleged harmful effects they were having on us innocent young people. I was just eight years old when I saw that 19th issue displayed on a rack at our local confectionery store. A year or more would pass before I worked up the courage to actually flip through, and eventually be allowed by my mother to purchase, one of those four - - color "forbidden books." But the vivid image on that cover - - a giant, husky, grotesque-looking manlike figure stalking past an old, probably haunted house - - would forever remain in my memory.

The character seemed to be about eight-feet tall, clad in blue pants and jacket, a red T-shirt and brown slip-on shoes. His skin was flesh-colored. His head was absolutely flat, topped with straight black hair that hung in unkempt bangs over a rather high forehead. An ugly gash literally split the forehead, the stitches broken to expose the whiteness of the skull underneath. The cheeks were sunken, cadaverous, and the mouth was torn and twisted into a horrible scowl that revealed the uneven teeth. Most intriguing was his pug nose, which was located high between the bulging eyes.

Though horrible to behold, there was something oddly intriguing, even compelling, about this strange creature and it was hard to look away (even for a young boy whose comic-book diet consisted mainly of the more sanitized exploits of Superman, Tarzan and Donald Duck). I would soon learn that this giant "man," whose adventures were detailed on the pages of this comic book, was Frankenstein's Monster - - or, as we kids called him in those less enlightened times, just "Frankenstein."

Over the next couple years, I continued to see the FRANKENSTEIN comic books on the racks, sometimes paging through them. Their cover illustrations would make lasting impressions on me, although I'd still not read any of the stories these covers were selling The distinctive FRANKENSTEIN logo also had an impact and was instantly recognized when I saw it again in 1958, "borrowed" for the premiere issue of the magazine THE JOURNAL OF FRANKENSTEIN (and its 1999 revival), as well as for a number of other later publications.



Issue #8 of the original FRANKENSTEIN comic.

The first FRANKENSTEIN issue I actually bought, took home, then read until the pages were in tatters, was number 32 (dated August, 1954). Two of the book's three stories were "Frankenstein" tales, set in modern times, and both signed by someone named Dick Briefer. The second "Frankenstein" story, a nine-pager titled "The Beautiful Dead" - - involving the Monster, a wax dummy of a beautiful woman and an equally lovely corpse - - ranks, in this writer's opinion, as one of the best-plotted short horror tales ever published in a comic book. Its final panel, showing the effects of decay on the once-gorgeous dead woman, her eyes bulging wide from a bony green face, her mouth gaping wide, was one I would never forget. Of equal impact was the story's penultimate panel, capturing the Monster's own horrified reaction to the rotting corpse.

That was the only issue of FRANKENSTEIN I purchased off the newsstand. The succeeding issue I never saw on the racks; and unfortunately, FRANKENSTEIN 33 would prove to be the last issue, being among the many victims of Dr. Frederic Wertham's anti-comic book campaign of the 1950s. And

just as the Monster in this series could not survive fire, his illustrated adventures would not live through the advent of the Comics Code Authority. For several years, this single issue constituted my main exposure to the Monster character, with Briefer's depiction of him, as far as I knew, the definitive one. (As a young boy, I purposely avoided seeing Universal's Frankenstein movies for fear that the Monster would look like it did in the comic book, and that was one hideous face I did not relish seeing blown up on a big theater screen! (I would not see my first two Frankenstein films, HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN and HOUSE OF DRACULA on a triple bill with THE MUMMY, until late August, 1956). I had become a fan of the comic book, but, unfortunately, it was too late.

Tracking down back issues of FRANKENSTEIN, even during those early, post-Comics Code days of the late 1950s, was difficult. Used book stores were not yet specializing in old comic books and mail order dealers were still, for the most part, a phenomenon of the future. A few years after FRANKENSTEIN ceased publication, I managed to obtain a coverless copy of issue number 31 (June-July, 1954) in one of those three-for-a-dime packs then sold in grocery and "mom and pop" stores. Not until the early 1960s did I find another issue (this time with a cover, yellowing in the window of a Chicago used book store), FRANKENSTEIN number 23 (February-March, 1953); it cost me a whopping four dollars and had only one "Frankenstein" tale ("The Monster's Mate"), but started a collecting adventure that would, but not until the early or middle 1960s, fetch me the entire 16-issue run.

FRANKENSTEIN, I would learn, was both written and drawn by Dick Briefer. The concept, at least an early and less refined version of it, really began in the seventh issue (December, 1940) of PRIZE COMICS, featuring an even bigger and more hideous Monster (mostly just called "Frankenstein") created by Victor Frankenstein about a decade before the start of World War Two. After numerous adventures, this version of the Monster - - a crafty, articulate being (the 1950s character did not speak) who enjoyed killing humans - - gradually evolved into a gentle, oafish comedic character (kind of a precursor to Herman Munster). The Prize group finally gave this humorous Frankenstein his own book, title FRANKENSTEIN (including a brand new and rather different origin for the title character), which successfully lasted for 17 issues (1945-49).

Later, the FRANKENSTEIN comic book was revived, picking up the original numbering with issue 18 (March, 1952). The series had been transformed into a straight, outright horror series in which Dick Briefer introduced a brand new version of his Monster. These stories, in keeping up with current trends, were often quite graphically gruesome. Often they climaxed with the Monster enacting some ghastly revenge on someone whom "the beast" had trusted, only to be used or betrayed. Although this mute incarnation bore certain physical resemblances to his predecessor (e.g., flat head, sunken cheeks, and between-the-eyes pug nose), he was clearly a separate character altogether, established in his debut story ("The Rebirth of the Monster") as at least 100 years old. And while I loved all of Briefer's FRANKENSTEIN efforts, it was this early 1950s version that I mostly preferred. (For details on Dick Briefer's "Frankenstein" series and stories, see this author's books THE FRANKENSTEIN LEGEND: A TRIBUTE TO MARY SHELLEY AND BORIS KARLOFF [Scarecrow Press, 1973] and THE FRANKENSTEIN CATALOG [McFarland and Company, 1984]; and "Frankenstein Meets the Comics," in THE COMIC BOOK BOOK [Arlington House, 1973, reprinted by Krause Publications, 1998], edited by Don Thomson and Dick Lupoff.)



Issue 24 of Dick Briefer's FRANKENSTEIN comic (1953).

Over the years, myriad comic-book series as well as individual stories would be based on the Frankenstein theme. Some of these would be fairly successful, others not. None, however, would ever achieve the success, longevity and popularity of the body of work produced by Dick Briefer over a period of fourteen years.

Remaining a fan of Dick Briefer and his work, I learned during the early 1970s that this very prolific creator was presently in Hollywood, Florida, no longer doing comics but making his living by painting portraits (of human beings, not monsters). In 1973, through comic historian Shel Dorf, I acquired Briefer's

address and began corresponding with him. This was shortly after he was prompted by the "Collectors Showcase" to reproduce as acrylic paintings some of his old comic-book covers, including FRANKENSTEIN numbers 7 (May-June, 1947, still part of the "funny" series) and 18. (I would eventually purchase these excellent pieces from Briefer.)

In Briefer's first letter to me (dated November 19, 1973), his handwriting the same as that familiar byline on so many of his old stories, he stated, "With all this nostalgia you and others are absorbed with, I feel more alive and appreciated today than I did back in the 40s and 50s."

Regarding his personal fondness for and interest in his FRANKENSTEIN work, Briefer wrote: "I started Frankenstein in PRIZE COMICS back in about 1940 as a serious series a la movie version for quite a spell. I found myself bored with it until I started sneaking little cute bits of humor in it here and there, and in 1945 it became the humorous a la Charles Adams [sic] character and plots that I enjoyed doing (writing and art) until that folded ... [and after it flopped in comic magazines, the publisher gave me the rights to try to get it syndicated in daily (newspaper) strip form which never was accepted]. Then after a lull, it went back to a serious affair for about 2 years which I again hated to work on."

From subsequent letters, I also learned that Briefer was not the big fan of his material that I was. "You've got to understand," Briefer wrote in one letter, "that I am not turned on about my past comic work - - there is no nostalgia at all." And he was really not interested in getting back into comics "I could never get myself to the first step of buying illustration board, India ink and brushes." Nor was he interested in having "to think out anything new - - just reproduce something I did in the past which has its own value," namely, those paintings based on his old covers.

To my surprise (and disenchantment), my long-time hero expressed no fondness at all for his 1950s FRANKENSTEIN, the version that was my favorite. Briefer admitted, however, that he might be coaxed out of comics retirement back to the world of panels, line art and dialogue balloons, at least on a part-time basis, under certain conditions. "I think of all the blank pages facing me off the drawing board that had to be filled with boxes of drawings and lettering, etc., not to mention script. But I would like to do another COMIC Frankenstein in the old vein if I could make the time and it paid well."

Over the next couple of years, Briefer and I discussed again trying to sell his old FRANKENSTEIN newspaper strip, featuring the funny version of his character, with me picking up the writing end of it once his already-completed continuity (based on stories from his old comic books) ran out. The idea of my working with someone who had been an idol since childhood was more than just appealing; therefore, I promptly began to concoct plot lines Alas, the newspaper project would again reach a dead end. However, this was not yet the end of our possible professional working relationship.

In the early 1970s, I began on a freelance basis writing scripts for the Marvel Comics Group, and in 1975 a story of mine was published in Marvel's humor title ARRGH! The comic book's editor, Roy Thomas, asked me if Dick Briefer and I might like to revive his humorous FRANKENSTEIN as a possibly continuing feature in ARRGH! Naturally I was interested. Briefer was interested, too, and so, I quickly thought up a plot involving the preservation of "Frankenstein's" nose in an ice cube, the cloning of his body from a cell scraped from that nose, and the character - - because of an electrical power failure similar to that which had just recently darkened New York - - again emerging from this bungled experiment as a good-natured oaf Unfortunately, learning that page rates for comic-book art had not soared to the heights he had anticipated since his leaving the business, Briefer bowed out of the project, and it appeared that no version - - neither serious nor funny - - of his FRANKENSTEIN was about to stalk the comic-book pages again

In later years, Dick Briefer and his



FRANKENSTEIN June-July 1953 No. 25.

Frankenstein monsters refused to stay dormant. The artist himself began to enjoy new recognition, largely thanks to the dedicated efforts of comics fan and historian Al Dellinges, who in 1979 and 1980 began devoting considerable space to Briefer in such "fanzines" as THE COMIC BOOK ART OF DICK BRIEFER and NEAR MINT. Also in 1980, Dellinges self-published FRANKENSTEIN: A HUMOROUS DAILY STRIP BY DICK BRIEFER, printing for the first time continuity from the unsold newspaper feature.

The Briefer Frankenstein Monster himself began to make new appearances, as in issues of the humor magazine CRACKED. Comic books published by "independent companies" (e.g., Eclipse, Caliber and Real Images) started to reprint some of the Briefer FRANKENSTEIN stories - - including some from the serious 1940s series, the humor series (including some revamped by 3D -maven Ray Zone to be read, with red-and green-lensed glasses, in three dimensions) and the pre-Comics Code horror series. Bill Black revived the horrific early 1940s version of the Monster for his independent AC line of comics, eventually renaming the character "Frightenstein" and making him part of

the "Action Comics universe" of long out-of-print master villains and superheroes.

One early 1990s afternoon in a Chicago suburb (years after Dick Briefer had passed away), at a wedding anniversary party for a couple working in the comic book business, I met a young Chicago-based artist named Brian Thomas. Brian and I shared numerous interests, including dinosaurs (Brian had recently illustrated the 1991 comic book DINOSAUR ISLAND) and the Frankenstein Monster. At the time, the majority of Brian's work involved drawing stories for the popular TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES and various "ARCHIE" comic books. When Brian subsequently mailed me a complimentary T-shirt illustrated by him, including a recreation of Briefer's funny Frankenstein character, our friendship was cemented for eternity.

Around this time, "revivals" of 1940s and 1950s titles (e.g., AIRBOY and MR. MONSTER) were popular in comic books, though the new adventures were presented with modern sensibilities, including the use of contemporary art styles and narrative techniques. There would also be new interest in the "Frankenstein" due to the publicity garnered from actor/director Kenneth Branagh's 1994 motion picture MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN. To me, the climate in the mid-1990s was perfect to launch a revival of Dick Briefer's FRANKENSTEIN, the 1950s horror version, as an ongoing series, and my friend Brian Thomas seemed just the artist to collaborate on it.

Brian - - himself a talented writer, with his own good ideas to share regarding the tone and direction of our proposed FRANKENSTEIN book - - responded immediately and enthusiastically. It wasn't long before the two of us were actively at work developing the project. Brian began making drawings of the Monster, while I went to the canon of Briefer stories in order to understand just what made them - - and their presentation of the Frankenstein Monster - - so memorable.



THE FURY OF FRIGHTENSTEIN was revealed in FEMFORCE # 53 and 54.

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In studying carefully and then analyzing the 1950s stories, I finally realized that, although this Frankenstein Monster bore some superficial similarities to the Universal Pictures character (e.g., flat head and black bangs), the two versions of the Monster were really quite different from each other - - this perhaps being a conscious effort by Briefer to avoid any copyright-infringement problems with the film studio. The Dick Briefer Monster wore blue and red clothes and brown shoes, while the Universal character wore black suit and raised black boots. Briefer's version sported neither the neck electrodes nor metal head clamps which were familiar trappings of Universal's Frankenstein Monster. There were no scars, stitches or sewn metal strip on the wrists, arms or hands. Instead of a neat scar on one side of the forehead and another on the cheek, Briefer's creature had an unsightly, ripped-open seam running down the middle. In all, with his watery eyes, torn mouth and uneven teeth, Briefer's image of the Monster made Universal's gray-faced character appear almost handsome by comparison.

Beyond the Monster's physical appearance, he also differed from his movie counterpart in personality, behavior, attitude and body language. Briefer's 1950s Monster never spoke, almost never made any kind of vocal sound (nor, unlike other comic-book Frankenstein Monsters over the years, was given "thought balloons," readers therefore never even knew what the giant was thinking). And unlike the Monster as portrayed in most of the Universal's films, Briefer's creature got hungry and required food to survive. While the motion-picture character could seemingly stay awake and tireless forever, the comic-book version needed his sleep. Universal's Monster moved stiffly, awkwardly, often slowly; Briefer's was nimble and active, frequently running, jumping, leaping or climbing, and, when seated, slouching or lounging. And while Universal's character could be strengthened by a jolt of electricity, such a zap could literally knock Briefer's Monster unconscious.

Thus, as Brian and I proceeded with the project, it was imperative that we

consistently remain keenly aware that we were not doing that most familiar version of Frankenstein's Monster from the Universal motion pictures; nor were we doing Mary Shelley's original conception of the character. We were doing Dick Briefer's Monster of Frankenstein, which, in its own right, was a unique and valid interpretation.

We decided that our Frankenstein comic book would pick up directly from where Dick Briefer's series left off in 1954, then switch to an updated storyline in the present. Fortunately, both Dellinges in his fan magazines, and Joe and Jim Simon in their book THE COMIC BOOK MAKERS (1990), had already published material which Briefer had prepared for the intended but never-completed FRANKENSTEIN number 34. This included a cover (showing an old person with a Voodoo doll of the Monster, the real Monster looming in the background) an unlettered splash page (the Monster pursued across a bridge by torch-carrying mob) with the story title "Witchcraft!", and also a lettered second page (the Monster escaping into the town's sewer system).

For added authenticity (and also as a tribute to Briefer), we incorporated redrawn and rewritten versions of those original unpublished pages into the beginning of our debut issue. Our opening story begins in 1954 with the Monster being pursued by those same angry townspeople - - symbolic of the real-life pressure groups that were out to suppress and destroy horror comics - - then escaping into the sewers (this sequence scripted and drawn by us in a writing and art style suggesting Briefer's own during the 1950s. Inadvertently put into suspended animation through actions engineered by a townsman curiously resembling Dr. Wertham, the Monster sleeps for decades, inevitably reviving in today's world (the series now presented utilizing modern comics' storytelling techniques).

Although our Monster of Frankenstein would then also exist in modern times, his world - - like the one Briefer had envisioned for him - - would mainly consist of unspecified places in Europe that still remained relatively old fashioned. Keeping faithful to Briefer's vision, we decided to keep the stories rather basic, eschewing the footnotes, cute editorial asides and other such distractions so common in today's comic books, and with the Monster himself the main fantasy-based character. In other words, save for the occasional vampire (never one with the notoriety of a Count Dracula), zombie or mad scientist's new creation, there would be no superheroes, costumed mutants or "cross-overs" with other famous characters.

I enthusiastically went to work, scripting in full the first six issues (three making up one complete storyline) and plotting several more. As in Briefer's earliest 1950s stories, our series would include a descendant of the Monster's creator who, in trying to restore the Frankenstein family name by working on the Monster, inadvertently unleashes more horror upon the world - - destroying his ancestor's creation then becoming his life's sole mission. The first story included something Briefer never revealed to us - - the Monster's origin. Because Briefer's 1950s Monster was established in his first story as having been created circa 1850, his "universe" must then be one in which Mary Shelley's earlier FRANKENSTEIN novel (first published in 1818) did not exist. In relating via flashback our own version of this Monster's creation, I tried to write it the way Briefer himself might have, following up on various clues found in the early 1950s issues, and basing it in part on the origin Briefer did show for his horror Monster of the 1940s.



As I began to write the scripts (one of which had the Monster involved with a small-time European dictator), Brian Thomas also continued to work - - penciling, inking and lettering several sample pages of the first story, creating model sheets for the character and also producing a possible cover. The latter was inspired by several of Briefer's own published covers, featuring a big close-up of the Monster's face; of course, it included the familiar original logo that had become a part of Frankenstein mythology. After considering and discussing numerous title possibilities for our revived series (we didn't want to simply call it FRANKENSTEIN, as that had become, in our estimation, too "generic"), Brian and I settled upon perhaps the most obvious one of all - - MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN.

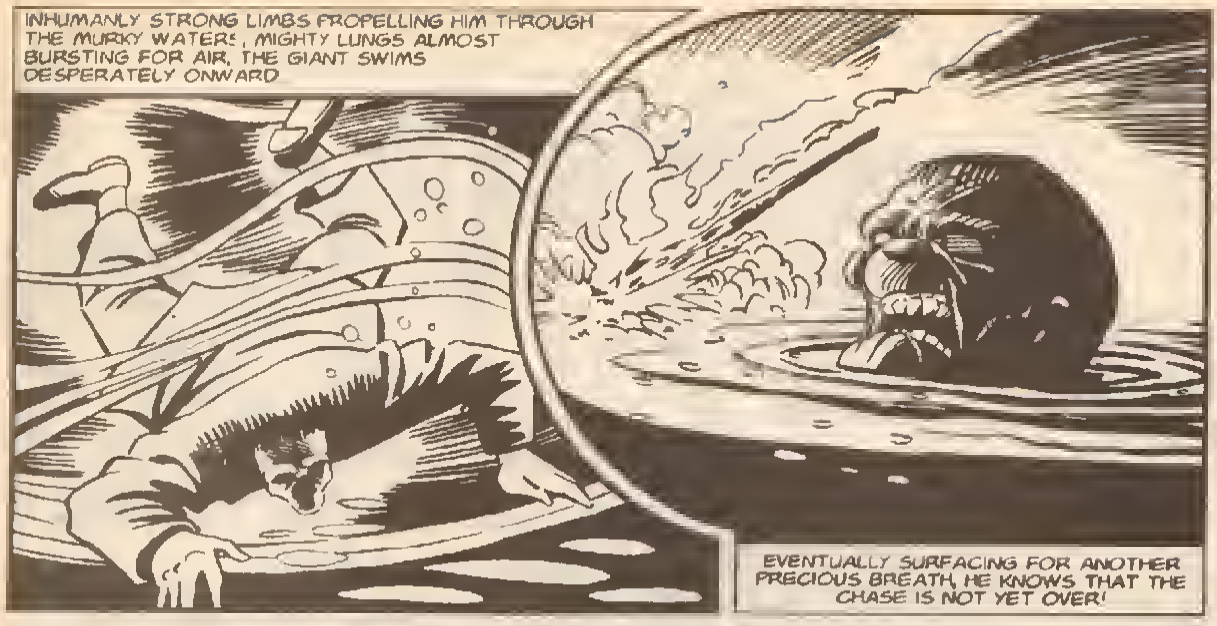
In the late 1990s, MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN was scheduled to debut as a series from Mike Williams' and Ricky Rocket's company No Mercy Comics. Brian's cover, intended for the



MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN story and artwork on this page and the next three pages ©2000 Donald F. Glut and Brian Thomas, title character and all related characters and indicia TM Glut and Thomas

first issue, was even colored by Ricky. Within a month following acceptance of the series, however, Mike and Ricky decided for economic reasons having nothing to do with our Frankenstein project, to withdraw from the comic-book business in pursuit of other endeavors. (Sadly, Mike, who returned to his former career in movie special effects, died of cancer shortly after No Mercy folded.)

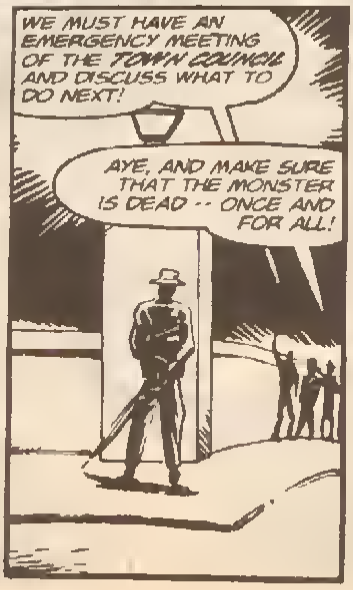
However, despite this temporary setback, MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN, like its immortal title character, will not perish and hopefully sometime soon during this new Millennium, Dick Briefer's creature, who has appeared in comic books in one form or another for more than half of the last century, will be stalking once again.


INHUMANLY STRONG LIMBS PROPELLING HIM THROUGH THE MURKY WATERS, MIGHTY LUNGS ALMOST BURSTING FOR AIR, THE GIANT SWIMS DESPERATELY ONWARD..
EVENTUALLY SURFACING FOR ANOTHER PRECIOUS BREATH, HE KNOWS THAT THE CHASE IS NOT YET OVER!


BATTLING AGAINST THE POWERFUL CURRENT, FEELING HIS WAY ALONG, HE FLEES INTO A HOLE IN THE CONCRETE RIVER BANK WALL..


..UNTIL, HIS LUNGS ALMOST EMPTY, HE LIFTS HIS HEAD.. AND BREATHES DEEPLY THE FOUL AIR OF A SEWER..


WHILE ABOVE THE STINKING LABYRINTH..
HE MUST HAVE DROWNED! NO HUMAN BEING CAN STAY UNDERWATER THAT LONG!
THE MONSTER ISN'T HUMAN! AND HE'S FOOLED US MANY TIMES BEFORE! I SAY HE COULD STILL BE ALIVE DOWN THERE!


WE MUST HAVE AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND DISCUSS WHAT TO DO NEXT!
AYE, AND MAKE SURE THAT THE MONSTER IS DEAD -- ONCE AND FOR ALL!


AS ALWAYS, FREDERICK IS NOT INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THE TOWN'S AFFAIRS THIS TIME HE DOESN'T MIND BEING EXCLUDED..
5


BULLETS CAN'T DO THE MONSTER SERIOUS DAMAGE HIS LEATHERY FLESH IMMEDIATELY SEALS THE HOLE
BUT THEY CAN HURT THE BRUTE -- AND MAKE HIM ANGRY! AS FOR THE POSSIBILITY OF HIM BEING CONCIOUS...
WELL, IF THE MONSTER IS HERE AND DOES HAPPEN TO REVIVE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...
WELL, I HOPE TO CONVINCE HIM THAT WE'RE HIS FRIENDS, THAT WE'RE HERE TO HELP HIM
HERE, NOW ..!
WISH WE COULD FIND AN UNBROKEN ONE OF THESE LOOKS LIKE IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR
MAYBE SOMEWHERE BACK HERE -- BLOODY HELL!
KLAUS! WHAT IS IT?!
WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS, DOCTOR?!
THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER!!


LIKE SOME FAST MOVING LIVING MONOLITH, THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER RISES TO HIS FULL AWESOME HEIGHT *HUMANS*. HIS MORTAL ENEMIES HAVE COME BACK -- TO HATE HIM, TORMENT HIM, TRY TO *END* HIS ARTIFICIAL LIFE
BEFORE THE *DARKNESS* CAME, THE GIANT HAD VOWED TO CONTINUE HIS WAR AGAINST THE HATED HUMAN RACE--
THE DARKNESS NOW LIFTED, THE TIME HAS COME TO SATISFY THE BEAST'S RAGE. ALL HUMANS THAT CROSS HIS PATH SHALL *DIE* -- AND *SHE* WILL BE THE FIRST!
TO BE *CONTINUED* ...!

BONUS FRANKENSTEIN FEATURE!

The first FRANKENSTEIN issue I actually bought, took home, then read until the pages were in tatters, was number 32 (dated August, 1954). Two of the books three stories were "Frankenstein" tales, set in modern times, and both signed by someone named Dick Briefer. The second "Frankenstein" story, a nine-pager titled "The Beautiful Dead" - - ranks, in this writer's opinion, as one of the best-plotted short horror tales ever published in a comic book. -

Donald F. Glut





This vintage THE MONSTER OF FRANKENSTEIN comic book story courtesy of Bill Black and AC Comics ©2000 by AC Comics Art and Story by Dick Briefer

THE MONSTER IS NEARING THE EDGE OF TOWN! SOON THERE WILL BE NO PLACE TO TAKE COVER, AND THE SIGHT OF BLAZING TORCHES STRIKES TERROR IN HIM! THERE IS A BUILDING NEAR HIM, AND WRENCHING OUT THE DOOR KNOB AND LOCK, HE ENTERS...



THE ROOM IS FILLED WITH TABLES WITH SHEET-COVERED FORMS ON EACH! THERE IS NO TIME TO INVESTIGATE THE SURROUNDINGS, BUT AT LEAST FOR HIS OWN PROTECTION THE GIANT MUST KNOW WHAT IS UNDER THE SHEETS...



LIFTING ONE COVER, HE SEES...



BUT NOW THERE IS NO TIME TO LOSE! THE SOUND OF THE SEARCHING, INFURIATED MOB COMES CLOSER UNTIL IT IS OUTSIDE THE BUILDING...



...AND THE MONSTER QUICKLY GETS ON A TABLE AND PULLS A COVER OVER HIM! IF THEY FIND HIM, HE MUST FIGHT... BUT THOSE FLAMING TORCHES!



IT WAS ALL VERY EASY, FOR AS THE MONSTER LIES THERE, HE HEARS THE CROWD MOVING AWAY IN THE DISTANCE!



HE IS SAFE! THERE IS SILENCE, AND THE MUTE FORMS LIE QUITE STILL! THE MONSTER SITS UP, THE SHEET SLIPPING SILENTLY TO THE FLOOR...



THE BEAST IS NOT READY TO VENTURE FORTH YET! HE MUST GIVE THE CROWD TIME TO DISPERSE! SO HE WAITS, LIFTING THE SHEETS AND LOOKING AT THE FIGURES UNDER THEM...



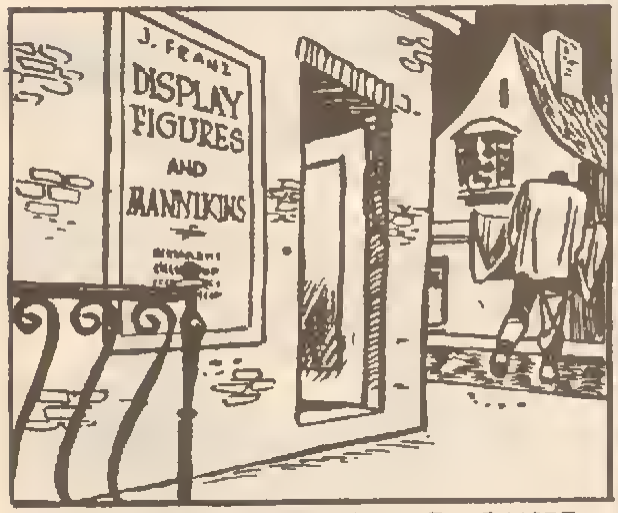
UNTIL HE COMES TO...



...THE MOST BEAUTIFUL CREATURE HE HAS EVER SEEN! THE CHASE AND HIS PREDICAMENT ARE FORGOTTEN... HE MUST TAKE THIS BEAUTIFUL THING WITH HIM!



SO HE DOES! WITH THE SHROUDED FIGURE IN HIS ARMS, HE STEALS OUT AND HEADS FOR THE PLACE THAT IS HOME TO HIM AT PRESENT!



...AN OLD ABANDONED HOUSE DEEP IN THE WOODS, OUT OF SIGHT OF INQUISITIVE PEOPLE!



THERE, IN THE COLD PARLOR, THE MONSTER SETS UP THIS LOVELY PRIZE OF HIS!



ONCE HE HAD FALLEN IN LOVE WITH A STATUE OF STONE... BUT THAT HAD BEEN FAR LESS BEAUTIFUL AND WARM THAN THIS NEW FIGURE OF WAX! WHY, THIS ONE LOOKED ALIVE, WITH REAL HAIR, AND GLOWING PINK SKIN...




ONE NIGHT WHEN THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER IS OUT, THE PRIVACY OF HIS HOME IS INVADED AS TWO MEN, SEEKING SHELTER, FOOD, AND SOME VALUABLES, FIND THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS AND ENTER IT!
NO LIGHTS ANYWHERE! NOBODY SEEMS TO BE AROUND!
THIS PLACE IS FALLING APART! HOW COULD ANYBODY LIVE IN IT? THERE WON'T BE ANYTHING HERE FOR US!
IN THE DARK, COLD PARLOR, THEY SUDDENLY COME ACROSS THE MANNIKIN...
SHH! SOMEBODY'S HERE! A WOMAN!
DON'T MOVE, LADY, OR YOU WON'T LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO REGRET IT IF YOU DO!
AHH-HA-HA! IT'S ONLY A STATUE! AND YOU THREATENING TO KILL HER!
AHH... SHUT UP! YOU THOUGHT IT WAS A GIRL, TOO! WELL, MAYBE SHE'LL BE GOOD COMPANY... ONCE WE GET A FIRE STARTED AND WARM UP THIS ROOM!
THERE! A BIG FIREPLACE, A BIG FIRE! THIS PLACE WILL BE PRETTY COMFORTABLE AFTER ALL! HOW DOES OUR GIRL FRIEND LIKE THE HEAT?
SHE ISN'T TALKING! LETS SEE IF SHE'LL SIT DOWN WITH US IN FRONT OF THE FIRE!
AWW, LOOK WHAT'S HAPPENING! SHE'S STARTING TO MELT!
HERE WE MEET THE PERFECT WOMAN WHO WON'T TALK OR NAG, AND SHE HAS TO GO AND START MELTING!
SHE'S NOT SO PRETTY ANY MORE! MORE ON THE SOUPY SIDE!
I'LL LIGHT HER HAIR AND SHE'LL BURN LIKE A CANDLE! BIGGEST CANDLE I'VE EVER SEEN!


ALTHOUGH THE MEN ARE ENJOYING THE SIGHT OF THE MELTING MANNIKIN, OTHER EYES LOOK ON IN ANGUISH AND FURY!


INTRUDING UPON THE MONSTER'S PRIVACY IS BAD ENOUGH, BUT THE VISION OF THE FAST MELTING FIGURE IS TOO MUCH FOR THE MONSTER...

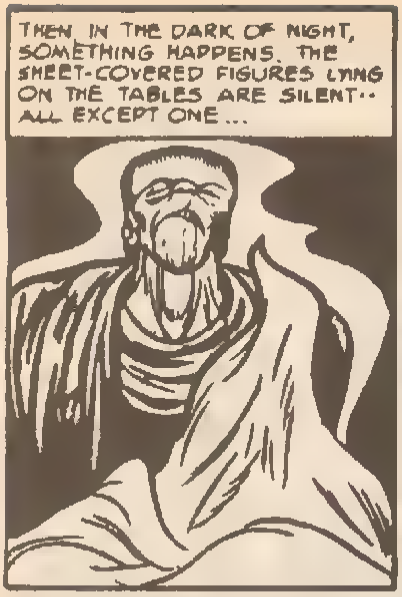

THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE OUTCOME...


THERE ARE SOME STIFLED CRIES FROM THE VICTIMS, ALONG WITH THE SOUND OF SNAPPING, CRACKING BONES...
YYAAHHHH


FIRE DESTROYED HIS LOVELY MANNIKIN FIRE WILL DESTROY HER DESTROYERS!

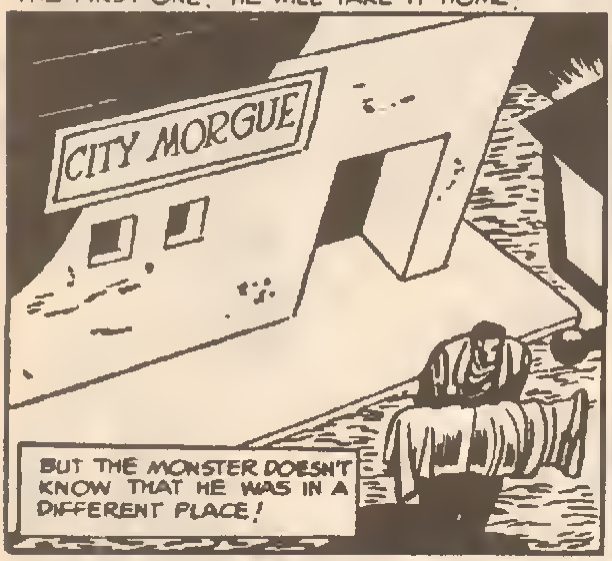

IT WAS ONLY A LITTLE THING.. KEEPING THE BEAUTIFUL MANNIKIN IN HIS HOUSE SO HE COULD LOOK AT IT AND ENJOY IT AS NORMAL PEOPLE ENJOY A PAINTING OR A WORK OF ART... BUT THAT IS GONE NOW...
5


SOME TIME LATER, THE MONSTER IS OUT FORAGING FOR FOOD. TODAY HE IS NOT SO LUCKY -- THE ONLY ANIMALS HE HAS SEEN HAVE MANAGED TO ELUDE HIM...
..BUT THERE, ATOP A POLE, IS A LARGE BIRD. HE MUST TRY TO GET IT...
HE HAS REACHED THE TOP, AND STILL THE BIRD HAS NOT FLOWN AWAY. HE PUTS OUT HIS HAND...
...BUT HIS ARM COMES IN CONTACT WITH A HIGH TENSION WIRE..
THE PURSUED BIRD STILL SITS PERCHED ATOP THE POLE AS THE MONSTER FALLS...
AND IT IS NOT TOO LONG THAT SOME PEOPLE DISCOVER THE ELECTROCUTED BODY OF THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER.
ONCE AGAIN, THE MONSTER IS LYING ON A TABLE, A SHEET COVERING HIS HUGE, DEAD FORM.
THAT'S THE SAME BEAST WE WERE CHASING LAST WEEK.'
WE DON'T HAVE TO CHASE IT ANY MORE. HE'S DEAD!
6


THEN, IN THE DARK OF NIGHT, SOMETHING HAPPENS. THE SHEET-COVERED FIGURES LYING ON THE TABLES ARE SILENT.. ALL EXCEPT ONE...


THE ELECTRIC SHOCK KNOCKED HIM OUT, BUT DID NOT KILL HIM! HE GETS OFF THE TABLE. THE PLACE SEEMS FAMILIAR.. HE REMEMBERS BEING THERE BEFORE, WITH A SHEET OVER HIM...


THEN HE LOOKS UNDER EACH SHEET UNTIL HE FINDS...


ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL FIGURE...AS BEAUTIFUL AS THE FIRST ONE! HE WILL TAKE IT HOME!
CITY MORGUE
BUT THE MONSTER DOESN'T KNOW THAT HE WAS IN A DIFFERENT PLACE!


THIS ONE, HE THINKS, WILL ALWAYS BE BEAUTIFUL -- NO ONE WILL COME TO DESTROY OR MUTILATE IT. HE WILL GUARD IT TOO WELL!


THIS ONE DOESN'T STAND UP AS WELL AS THE OTHER, SO THE MONSTER SEATS HER IN A CHAIR. YES, SHE IS AS BEAUTIFUL AS THE OTHER -- PERHAPS MORE SO...


A LONG TIME AGO THE MONSTER HAD FOUND A BOX OF JEWELS IN A HIDDEN WALL SAFE. NOW HE HAS A USE FOR THOSE JEWELS -- TO ENHANCE THE BEAUTY OF HIS COMPANION...

THE MONSTER HAS BEDECKED HER WITH ALL THE JEWELS HE HAD STORED AWAY IN THE HOUSE. BUT THAT IS NOT ENOUGH-- HE MUST FIND MORE... AND SOME BEAUTIFUL CLOTHES...



HE MUST GO OUT AND LOOK FOR THEM. IT MEANS HE MUST LEAVE HER UNPROTECTED FOR A WHILE, BUT HE WILL TAKE THE CHANCE. OUT HE GOES, HEADED FOR TOWN...



BUT THERE IN TOWN HE IS SPOTTED BY SOME PEOPLE WHO GIVE CHASE, AND ONCE AGAIN THE MONSTER IS PURSUED THROUGH THE STREETS.



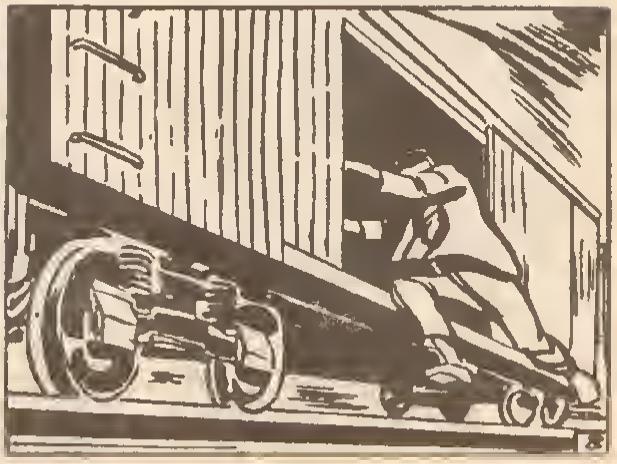
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN, A FREIGHT TRAIN IS GATHERING SPEED. FOR A MINUTE THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER ELUDES HIS CHASERS...



..AND UNSEEN BY ANYONE, HE LEAPS INTO THE OPEN FREIGHT CAR.



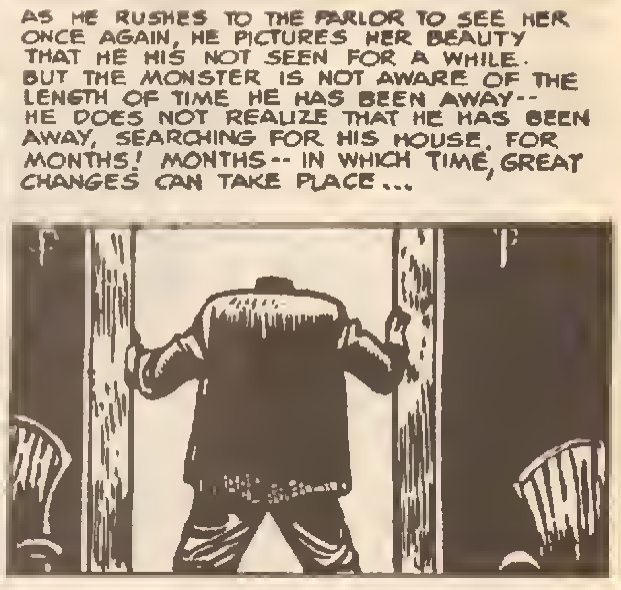
THE TRAIN IS RACING ALONG, AND THE MONSTER FEARS JUMPING OFF. IT IS QUITE SOME TIME AND QUITE SOME DISTANCE BEFORE THE TRAIN SLOWS DOWN ENOUGH FOR HIM TO LEAP TO THE GROUND...




NOW TO GET BACK--BUT HOW? EVEN FOLLOWING THE TRACK DOESN'T HELP, FOR THERE ARE SWITCHES THAT CONFUSE THE MONSTER...


SOMETIMES HIS TRAVEL IS HELD UP--HE CANNOT GO THROUGH A TOWN IN THE DAYTIME--EVEN AT NIGHT HE RUNS A RISK. HE BACKTRACKS AND FOLLOWS THE OTHER SWITCH-OFF...


AND FINALLY, HE SIGHTS FAMILIAR LANDMARKS, AND AT LAST HE COMES TO HIS HOUSE -- THE HOUSE IN WHICH HIS BEAUTY WAITS FOR HIM.


AS HE RUSHES TO THE PARLOR TO SEE HER ONCE AGAIN, HE PICTURES HER BEAUTY THAT HE HIS NOT SEEN FOR A WHILE. BUT THE MONSTER IS NOT AWARE OF THE LENGTH OF TIME HE HAS BEEN AWAY-- HE DOES NOT REALIZE THAT HE HAS BEEN AWAY, SEARCHING FOR HIS HOUSE, FOR MONTHS! MONTHS-- IN WHICH TIME, GREAT CHANGES CAN TAKE PLACE...


HORROR REGISTERED ON A HORRIBLE FACE IS AN AWFUL, HIDEOUS SIGHT...


HIS VISION OF LOVELINESS IS NO MORE. HE HAS BEEN AWAY TOO LONG, BUT EVEN HAD HE STAYED, HE COULD NOT HAVE PREVENTED THE INEVITABLE DECOMPOSITION AND ROT THAT SET IN TO DESTROY THE BODY HE STOLE FROM THE MORGUE!
THE END

THE MONSTER

(Metro-Goldwyn Pictures, 1925)

DR. MANIAC'S MOVIE REVIEW

The Doc goes back to the days of FRANKENSTEIN FILM FOSSILS, and finds a movie that couldn't make up its mind what sort of picture it wanted to be.





Howling winds twist dead trees into menacing shapes. At the end of a dirt road stands and old dark house. Inside the house are dark dusty corridors lined with spider webs, secret passageways, sliding doors, and strange people, one of whom might be the mad killer who is stalking those dark corridors in a cape and a concealing hood. Suddenly one of those secret doors slides open and a corpse falls out! The killer has struck again! Ah, but *who* is the killer? Which of the mysterious inhabitants of the old dark house could it be?

Yes, I know, you've seen the plot in dozens of movies. The hero was usually a wisecracking reporter played either by Lee Tracy or Wallace Ford. Those mysterious houses were often populated by Wheeler Oakman, Tully Marshall, Brandon Hurst, Charles Middleton, Clara Kimbal Young or Clara Blandick. Most of whom had been stars during the silent days but whose careers had slipped to the Poverty Row studios soon after talking pictures became popular. The cop on the beat was the likably dumb Irish stereotype and played by Nat Pendleton, Allen Jenkins, Vince Barnett, Ed Brophy or Frank McHugh. For comedy relief you could always rely on Willie Best (aka "Sleep N' Eat"), Fred Toombes (aka "Snowflake"), or Mantan Moreland. The killer was unmasked in the last reel and always turned out not to be the obvious suspect but the person who had been so helpful and likable in the early part of the movie, but who was in reality a dangerous psychopath. The movies came from studios with names like Mascot, Chesterfield, Reliable and Invincible and the plots were often as creaky as the front door of the house where the plots unfolded. Then again, have you ever wondered how far back the genre goes? Further than you think, and that's what I am here to talk about.

Most people agree the 1927 film THE CAT AND THE CANARY as the one that started the "old dark house" genre. Directed by Paul Leni, who brought lots of imagery from the gothic terrors of the German silents with him; the film is certainly one of the best, but *first* it was not. MIDNIGHT FACES starring Francis X. Bushman Jr. came a whole year earlier and employed every technique that soon became standard in this type of thriller. This is not a lost film, prints do exist, but still many historians have chosen to ignore it. Also in 1926 came the first film incarnation of THE BAT, a thriller about a jewel thief who wears a scary bat mask and hides out in a creepy country house. Even D. W. Griffith (yes, *the* D. W. Griffith) did time in an old dark house. His 1914 five reel thriller THE AVENGING CONSCIENCE had Edgar Allan Poe (Henry B. Walthall) falling asleep in his creepy, cobwebby abode and dreaming the plots of "The Pit and The Pendulum", "Annabel Lee" and "The Tell Tale Heart" all in a single night

Even Lon Chaney Sr got involved in the bizarre goings-on that occurred behind the creaking doors of the isolated country house.





Those of us who love Lon Chaney's movies acknowledge the debt owed to Forrest J Ackerman and "Famous Monsters of Filmland" magazine for keeping Lon's memory alive through the eras of I Was A Teenage (fill in the blank), giant insects on the march, the Technicolor terrors from Hammer and the "haven't I seen that set in some other movie" films of Roger Corman. Chaney, we can now accept, was not a terror film star, he was a *character* actor who often played scary people. I have a hard time calling THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME (1923), a terror film because if we do we have to call Quasimodo a monster, which he certainly wasn't. THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA (1925) turned out not to be a ghost at all but a hideously ugly man driven mad by the loneliness imposed upon him by a world which shunned him because of his looks. Now then about THE MONSTER ..hmmm...this is going to be harder that I thought. Stick with me and you will see why.

Lon had just finished HE WHO GETS SLAPPED (1924) at Metro-Goldwyn Studios and moved right away into another project, not technically a Metro-Goldwyn picture, THE MONSTER was an independent produced and directed by Roland West; Metro did release it under their banner though Goldwyn Pictures had merged with Metro the year before and Louis B. Mayer and "boy genius" Irving Thalberg were in charge. One of Thalberg's first official acts was to fire director Erich von Stroheim for going overtime and over budget with his film MERRY GO ROUND. Lon Chaney had made his landmark film THE MIRACLE MAN for Paramount in 1919 but had moved to Metro in 1920 to do THE PENALTY. He signed a contract guaranteeing him a weekly salary of $500 We can only imagine what went through Chaney's mind when he accidentally overheard casting director Clifford Robertson tell the studio manager "We were lucky to sign Chaney for only $500 a week I was ready to go as high as $1,500."

Lon Chaney Jr. said his father

considered HE WHO GETS SLAPPED to be his best picture. The story involved a disgraced scientist who flees from the academic world after losing not only a valuable invention but also his wife to his financial backer. Hiding in a circus, Chaney literally becomes a nameless figure, a clown character known only as "He" who gets laughs by saying things that earn him a slap from his fellow clowns. Also in the cast were Tully Marshall and Brandon Hurst, both of whom had been with Chaney in THE HUNCHBACK and Ford Sterling, the man who had created The Keystone Cops with Mack Sennett back in 1913. We now know for a fact that *Bela Lugosi* appeared in this film as an extra Bela had appeared on Broadway already in plays like THE RED POPPY, OPEN HOUSE, and ARABESQUE but he was still "Bela *Who*?" as far as Hollywood was concerned. You are likely to get eyestrain staring at all the extras in clown makeup trying to spot him. He soon returned to New York were he appeared in the movie THE MIDNIGHT GIRL as a villainous opera producer.

THE MONSTER started out like a melodrama. A dark night on a lonely country road finds a shadowy figure perched in a tree. A title card warns us this is no less than "An inhuman monster watching with catlike eyes for a human victim." The strange figure slowly cranks a large mirror down onto the road. The driver of a passing car thinks another motorist is heading right at him so he swerves off the road and crashes The figure quickly raises the mirror again and then he and a helper grab the man from the wreck and carry him away.

The missing motorist just happened to be Mr Bowman, the richest man in the nearby town of Donberg; so the town's entire police force, one man, goes to investigate. Amos Burg (Hallam Cooley), head clerk at Mr. Bowman's general store, looks the wrecked car over very carefully and deduces "I'll bet a new spark plug Mr. Bowman met with an accident." He is *not* going to be the hero of this picture Johnny (Johnny Arthur) another clerk at the store, has ambitions to be a detective He finds a scrap of paper



suggesting someone from the strange sanitarium on the hill has been near the wreck. The constable reminds him "Why that old sanitar-rarium has been closed for 2 years!"

Johnny and Amos are both in love with Betty (Gertrude Olmstead) and while Johnny is much too faint hearted to stand up to his boss he hopes to impress Betty by solving the case of Mr. Bowman's disappearance. "Do something big." Betty tells him "So they'll have to notice you." Truly fate must be on Johnny's side because that very day he gets his diploma from his Detective Correspondence School and his kit which includes handcuffs and a gun.

Going back to the site of the crash to search for clues Johnny meets up with Daffy Dan (Knute Erickson) who asks him for a match and then rolls and lights an imaginary cigarette. Dan asks "Do you know who I am?" and when Johnny replies no he responds "Neither do I!" Johnny watches as Dan and his partner Rigo (George Austin), the odd looking fellow from the opening scene, arrange the mirrors to cause yet another car wreck. The crash so startles Johnny that he falls through a trap door and into a tunnel. As luck (?) would have it the tunnel leads to the sanitarium. Meanwhile the people in the wrecked car, Amos and Betty, also make their way to the house hoping to call for help.

The three are re-united in the mysterious old house they all thought was deserted. Johnny catches glimpses of people watching them from around corners and suggests they all leave but the doors are locked and the windows have steel shutters

From upstairs appears an odd looking but pleasant mannered man who introduces himself as Dr. Ziska (Lon Chaney) and says that he is in charge. He summons his mute giant servant Caliban (Walter James) and tells him "See that the guest receive the *usual* treatment." Is it time to panic yet?

The reluctant guests are shown their rooms but they decide there is safety in numbers. Betty finds a trap door in the corner of her room. Johnny wonders out loud "Who will see where it goes?" only to be reminded by Amos "You're the detective!" Now is when the old dark house cliches really start coming at us fast, but remember, this movie was made so long ago they were not cliches yet.



The smoke from the fireplace is actually a sleeping gas that knocks Amos and Betty out cold. Clutching hands emerge from secret panels. Betty's bed vanishes through a trap door. Meanwhile Jittery Johnny downs almost a whole pitcher of brandy, which his tee-totaler system is not accustomed to, and he quite forgets what a coward he is supposed to be. When he sits down to consult his detective school manual he does not realize he is sitting in an electric chair. A hand reaches from behind a curtain to throw the switch that will send a fatal jolt through our hero. Luckily he stands up just in time. Investigating further Johnny discovers the missing Mr. Bowman and Dr. Edwards, the real owner of the sanitarium. Dr. Ziska was an inmate there (gadzooks, who saw *that* plot twist coming?) but took control with the help of his three assistants

Amos is held captive by the mad doctor, who informs him "you and I alone shall witness what happens. And neither one shall tell!" Caliban wheels out Betty, who is strapped to an operation table. "At last the fools have brought me a woman." gloats Ziska "Only from a woman can I learn the secret of life. Don't you dare call *ME* mad!" He plans to kill Amos and transfer his would to Betty's body.

The hooded Rigo skulks into the room and is ordered "Tighten the straps on the death chair!" But this time it isn't Rigo under the cloak, it's Johnny! The clerk-turned-mail-order-detective frees Amos and overpowers Ziska, strapping him to his own electric chair. The mad medic calls out "Caliban! The chair! Kill him!" but the mute giant misunderstands (well he *is* crazy don't forget) and throws the switch on the chair, sending his insane master to that big laboratory in the sky.

Finally the local constable alerted by the bright flashes coming from the supposedly deserted house, arrives to put the remaining inmates in custody and free the captives. Johnny has finally done something big, and is able to win Betty's affection. A happy ending is one cliche

we can never get tired of.

The "inmates taking over the asylum" plot went back a long way in movies. A 1915 film called THE LUNATICS was deemed "too gruesome for Sunday showings" because of one scene were a stream of blood trickles under a door. Insanity is a very scary thing because insane people look just like "normal" folks until they betray themselves by their irrational actions. What's more, insane people don't know they are mad. To them, the things they do are perfectly normal.

Now remember what I said at the beginning, about this being a movie that couldn't make up its mind? THE MONSTER was a rarity in those early days of motion pictures, a scary comedy. Oh yes there were a few of them, the 1917 farce AN EGYPTIAN MUMMY and Harold Lloyd's 1920 HAUNTED SPOOKS but these were two-reel shorts, a feature was something else entirely. Modern historians have called THE MONSTER a spoof of scary movies, but how could it be? The terror film genre did not exist yet! Not until the success of DRACULA and FRANKENSTEIN (both 1931) did the first great cycle of monster movies get started. Scary elements were usually injected in silent movies like THE SORROWS OF SATAN (1926) and DANTE'S INFERNO (1927) in the form of a dream sequence in order to accentuate a moral point; the reformation of the villain usually. LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT (1927) and SEVEN FOOTPRINTS TO SATAN (1929) looked like genuinely scary stuff until the final reel when the supernatural elements were exposed as elaborate hoaxes. True "monster movies" were usually imports like THE GOLEM (1920), NOSFERATU (1922) and FAUST (1926).

Audiences who went to see THE MONSTER in 1925 came away uncertain of whether they should be laughing or shuddering at what they saw. Fans of Lon Chaney saw his name and the title and doubtless expected a serious film. the opening scene certainly sets the mood for a thriller with the insane Rigo staging a car wreck. The next scene however establishes the comedic elements. One of



our main characters is introduced via the title "Amos Berg blew into town one day and has been blowing ever since." Comedian Johnny Arthur was billed directly below Chaney. Those who remember Mr. Arthur today probably recall him as the henpecked husband in the Little Rascals two reelers BIRTHDAY BLUES where his birthday dinner is constantly spoiled by the misdirected good intentions of Alfalfa (Carl Switzer) and his pals and ANNIVERSARY TROUBLE where his forgetting his wedding anniversary leads to all sorts of problems. Johnny moved away from comic characters briefly in the 1943 action serial THE MASKED MARVEL where he played Sakima, a Japanese saboteur.

THE MONSTER was directed by Roland West, who a year later would direct the first *two* film versions of the popular play THE BAT. Watching THE MONSTER today we can see West was trying out the techniques he would use in the later film. He is constantly putting the shadows to good use. Using careful lighting techniques a character descending a staircase throws a sinister, enveloping shadow that is not easily forgotten. There is also a chase scene in reel 5 that is repeated almost verbatim in THE BAT. Regrettably West decided on a mixture of comedy and suspense that came out as uneven to say the least. The main villain even dies at the end even though he has killed no one during the course of the film! Also West did not take full advantage of the most exploitable element he had on hand...Lon Chaney! Lon does not even appear until the beginning of reel 3, literally the halfway point of the movie! His makeup is very subtle this time; just a hairpiece, white pancake and dark shadows under his eyes. His Dr. Ziska at first is a charming host, but the facade lasts only a few minutes. When Johnny asks him "Doctor, will we see you in the morning?" and he replies "Who knows if any of us will see the morning?" you know something sinister is only moments away. True his acting is a



bit broad at times and he goes totally over the top during the climactic lab scenes, but it is a kind of reassuring to know that Lon Chaney was just as capable of devouring the scenery as the mad doctors who came later like George Zucco and Lionel Atwill. For some reason I was constantly reminded of Atwill while watching Lon in the last two reels of this movie. Chaney's other filmic efforts released that year were THE UNHOLY THREE and TOWER OF LIES where he plays a Swedish farmer who goes mad from heartbreak when his only daughter goes away to the city seeking a better life.

Of course his most famous release of 1925 was THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA. While these days we consider the movie a classic, thanks to historian Michael Blake we now know that PHANTOM was a flop when it was previewed in January of 1925. Audiences did not like the ending where, after seven reels of murder and mayhem, The Phantom was redeemed by a single kiss for the heroine and ides almost immediately of a broken heart after he releases her. The addition of new scenes, deletion of others, and lengthening of the finale to make it more action packed and less maudlin delayed the release until September of that year. Ah but the full story of the many versions of THE PHANTOM is another story for another article at another time.

So does THE MONSTER belong with the old dark house genre? Yes! Is it a classic? Well...um...yes it is, especially if you love Lon Chaney and this particular genre. If you have never seen this movie or wish to reacquaint yourself with it, it is now available on video with color tinting and a music score.

by Tom Triman

THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN ON DVD

Unlike the original FRANKENSTEIN, its celebrated first sequel, in which Henry Frankenstein (Colin Clive) creates a mate (Elsa Lanchester) for his Monster (Boris Karloff), has yet to be enhanced by the process of restoration. As a result, it presents the grainiest image of all the Universal Monster DVDs, combined with an occasional throbbing "hum" on the soundtrack. The picture has been rather tightly cropped for the TV screen. Despite these flaws, the DVD of THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN displays remarkable sharpness and excellent contrast.

Chapter Titles: "Main Titles", "Lord Byron", "The Story Resumes", "Blackened Bones?", "Henry Recovers", "Private Business", "The Experiments", "In the Woods", "Captured?", "The Blind Man", "In the Cemetery", "Unwelcome Visit", "Unlawful Work", "Where's Elizabeth?", "Waiting for Life", "She's Alive", "Rebuffed" and "End Titles".

The disk's main menu bears four alternating closeups of Elsa Lanchester as the bride. In the background are shifting views of the windmill ruins, the interior of the Frankenstein castle and other vague images from the film, combined with a super-imposed flame effect. This is scored by an excerpt from Franz Waxman's musical score.

The BRIDE disk includes "Cast and Filmmakers' Biographies" of Boris Karloff, Colin Clive, Valerie Hobson, Elsa Lanchester, Una O'Connor, Ernest Thesiger, Dwight Frye, O.P. Heggie and James Whale. In the Karloff and Whale filmographies, the Realart reissue trailer for the 1931 FRANKENSTEIN can be accessed. The BRIDE trailer can be viewed as a separate bonus material.

The disk's poster and still montage, THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN ARCHIVES, is also scored by Waxman's music the only voice heard therein is Elsa Lanchester's "scream heard 'round the world".

On the disk's audio commentary track, film scholar Scott MacQueen calls BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN "the perfect horror movie", its every element bearing the mark of James Whale's superb direction.



DIGITAL HORROR CLASSICS: Part 2
THE UNIVERSAL MONSTERS ON DVD

throughout the film, MacQueen offers detailed information about its cast and crew.

MacQueen gives a detailed description of Jack Pierce's makeup applications for Karloff's Monster and for Lanchester's Bride. MacQueen mistakenly claims that Karloff did not remove a bridge of molars to create an indentation in the Monster's right cheek, as he had in the original FRANKENSTEIN. In actuality, Karloff played the Monster sans dental bridge in all three of his portrayals of the character in the Universal series, to create an impression of facial cadaverousness.

MacQueen details the convoluted development of the film's screenplay, describing several scenes from earlier drafts that were discarded, and sequences from the final draft that were either unfilmed or cut after the preview. He explains how visual effects wizard John P. Fulton achieved the sequence displaying Pretorious' living homunculi collection and identifies the actors who played the little people.

MacQueen praises the film's skillful editing, art direction and cinematography. He calls director Whale an ironist rather than a parodist and points out several of the director's distinct trademark effects in the film.

MacQueen offers an assessment of Karloff's sympathetic portrayal of the Monster in BRIDE as a victim of society. He mentions Karloff's objection to the Monster's dialog in the film, which rendered the creature an evolving, interactive, more dimensional character than in the original.

MacQueen profiles the film's cinematographer, John Mescall, describing his "Rembrandt" lighting effects, as well as other photographic and lighting techniques employed by him. He refers to sequences in METROPOLIS (1926) and THE MAGICIAN (1926) as models for the laboratory scene in BRIDE.

MacQueen concludes his commentary with an amusing anecdote about Whale, revealing how the director had the last laugh over THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN.



SHE'S ALIVE! CREATING THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN

The production history of Universal's THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN is presented by host Joe Dante. Several interviewed film historians unanimously praise the film as "the crowning jewel" of Universal's horror classics of the thirties. Paul Jensen designates director James Whale as the film's true auteur, responsible for basic ideas in both its script and art direction.

Sara Karloff reveals her disagreement with her father's objection to the Monster's dialog in BRIDE and expresses her admiration for the film's long-lasting, multi-generational appeal. She also explains why her father abandoned the Monster role after working in SON OF FRANKENSTEIN (1939).

Rick Baker illustrates Jack Pierce's modifications of the Monster's makeup, showing the effects of the windmill blaze at the end of the original FRANKENSTEIN. Baker discloses that Pierce streamlined the Monster makeup and that Karloff's discomfort in the heavy get-up was alleviated somewhat, since he was now a major star with his name above the title, a status he had not yet acquired while performing in the original FRANKENSTEIN. Baker goes on to examine Pierce's more glamorous, less grotesque makeup design for Lanchester as the Bride.

Gregory Mank recalls Elsa Lanchester's dislike for Pierce, which she revealed to him in an interview. She also explained to him that the Bride's famous "hiss" was an imitation of a sound she heard swans make while visiting Regent's Park in London. Jensen and Scott MacQueen analyze Franz Waxman's famous BRIDE score. MacQueen identifies Waxman's musical leitmotifs for the Monster, the Bride and Dr. Pretorious.

Mank delineates fifteen minutes that were trimmed from the film between its preview and release. MacQueen and Dwight D. Fyre depict a deleted subplot involving Dwight Fyre, Sr. as Karl Glutz, who murders his aunt and uncle and blames the Monster for the killings. Jensen and Clive Barker interpret the sinister character of Dr. Pretorious, as played by Ernest Thesiger.

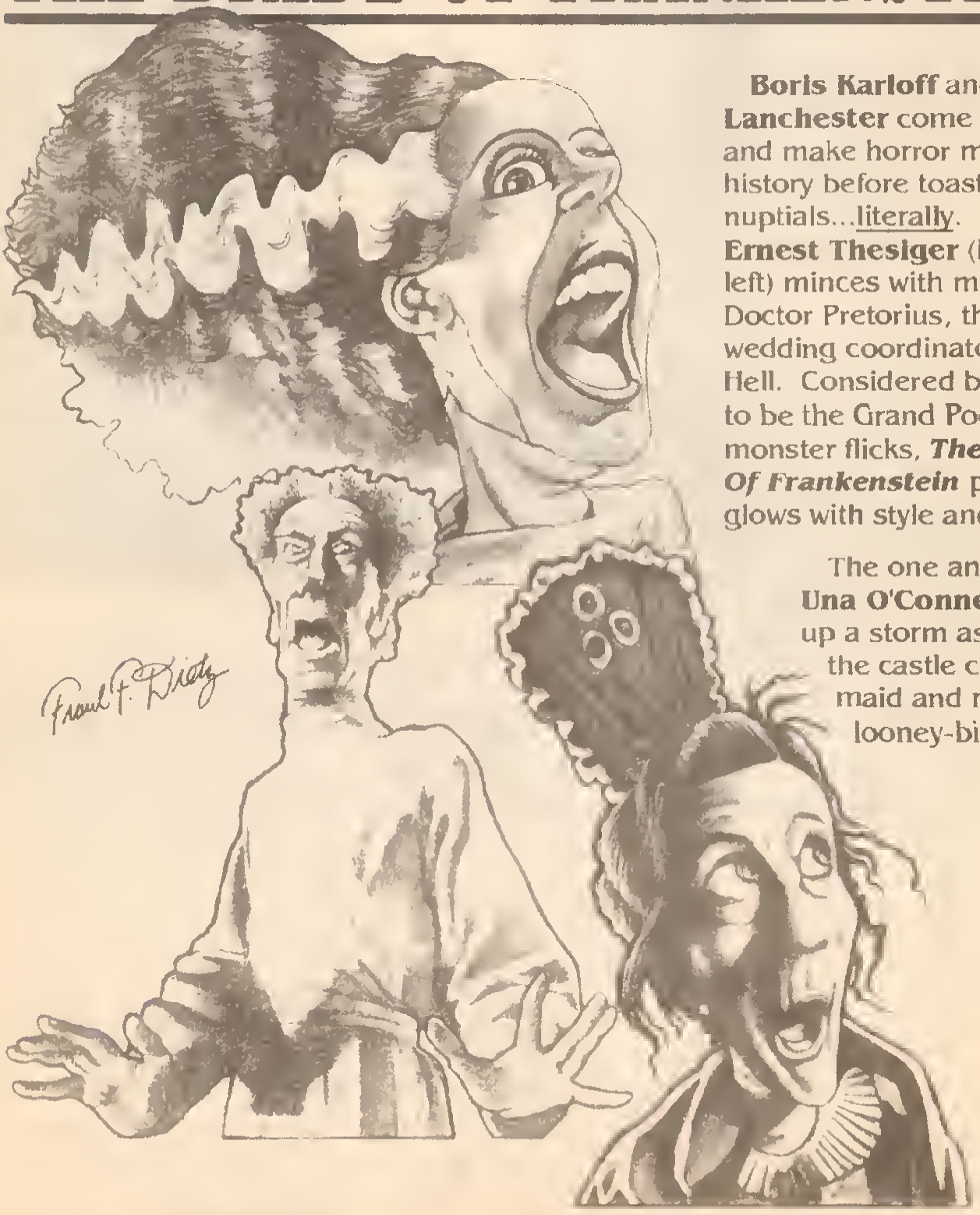
Bill Condon, director of GODS AND MONSTERS, describes Whale's near-autonomy under the Laemmle management of the early thirties, which ended abruptly, later in the decade, when the studio ownership changed hands. Mank commends THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN as a perfect example of a director injecting himself into a cinematic work, asserting that Whale's personality permeates every aspect of the film.

The influence of THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN on other films is illustrated by a clip from BRIDE OF CHUCKY, in which Chucky, the monstrous, living doll, electrocutes his future "bride" in a bathtub, as she watches THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN on TV.

On display in SHE'S ALIVE are busts of Karloff and the Bride by Wolf's Head Productions and a Frankenstein Monster portrait by Aaron Sims.

Frank Dietz's THE SKETCH FILES Presents

THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN!



Boris Karloff and **Elsa Lanchester** come together and make horror movie history before toasting their nuptials...literally.

Ernest Thesiger (below left) minces with menace as Doctor Pretorius, the wedding coordinator from Hell. Considered by many to be the Grand Poobah of monster flicks, ***The Bride Of Frankenstein*** positively glows with style and wit...

The one and only **Una O'Conner** shrieks up a storm as Minnie, the castle chamber-maid and resident looney-bird .

This time, Karloff's Monster is the true hero of the piece. He is also permitted to speak, which allows for a very poignant confrontation with Henry Frankenstein, bringing their relationship full circle. We see the Monster come to terms with his existence, and in the end, even show compassion for the man that created him. The Monster would never again be portrayed with such depth and dignity...



Positively dripping with sinister intent, Doctor Pretorius is one of the most intriguing characters of the Frankenstein films. Played with a lethal condescending sneer, Thesiger's mad doctor wallows in his own evil, relishing each and every crime as much as his gin and cigars. When he comments to Henry that they once would have been burned at the stake for their deeds, one gets the odd sense that he wishes that was still the case...

The Sketch Files are excerpted from the book ***The Things Remain Sketchy*** by Frank F. Dietz.
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For more info e-mail: **FDietz@sketchythings.com**

DRACULA

An Eerie Audio Adventure

by Bob Statzer

In 1965, Russ Jones approached Ian Ballantine (of Ballantine Books fame) about producing a paperback of Bram Stoker's 1898 horror classic, *Dracula*; not merely another reprint, but an all-illustrated edition. The result was a rare treat, an accurate adaptation of the novel worthy of the work seen in *Creepy*, *Eerie* and other black and white magazines. (Marvel Comics would make a similar attempt- -in serial form- -in their B&W title, *Dracula Lives!*. Unfortunately, the magazine was discontinued before the presentation could be completed.) Adding to the prestige of the Ballantine paperback was the introduction to it written by Christopher Lee, who has just completed his second portrayal of the vampire count in **DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS**. To this day, I can still recall his opening observation: "Dracula- -the name is almost a snarl." While brief, Christopher's comments about the Gothic masterpiece set the stage for what was to come. (To fully appreciate Lee's mastery with words and wit, pick up a copy of the actor's autobiography, *Tall, Dark and Gruesome*.) After the prologue had been penned, Jones realized the respect Christopher Lee held for Bram Stoker's work, and inquired if the actor might have an interest in doing a faithful audio adaptation. (Lee had previously recorded dramatic readings of Stoker's short stories *Dracula's Guest* and *The Judge's House*.) And so was born a terrifying *tour de force*: **"Dracula, Narrated by Christopher Lee,**: a two-record set capturing the vampire on vinyl (for those of us who remember LPs).

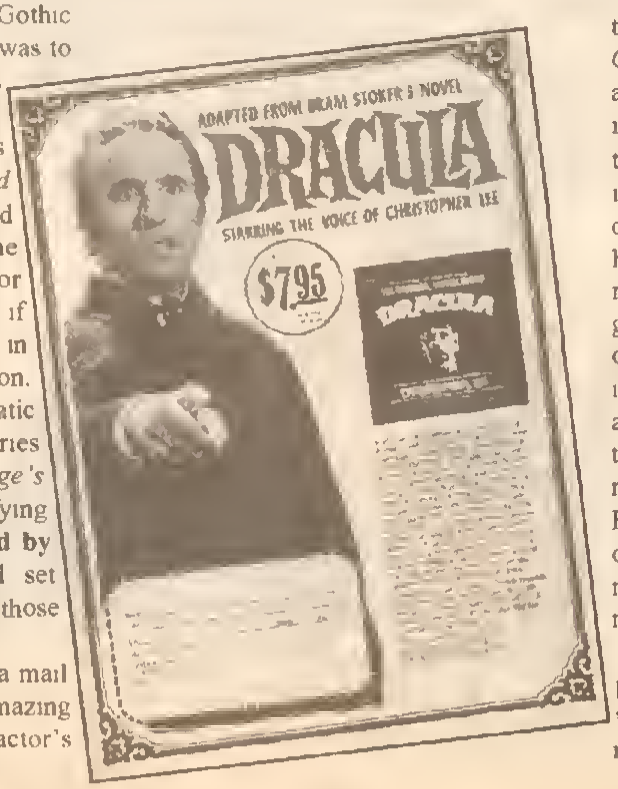
"Dracula" (originally offered as a mail order item for under $4!!!) is an amazing achievement, showcasing the actor's vocal versatility as he assumes the various roles in this one-man show (The late Peter Cushing had often commented on his friend and colleague's gift of mimicry, whether it be accents, celebrity impersonations or even Warner Bros. classic cartoon characters, and Lee's Dr Van Helsing sounds as if it could have been the springboard for the voice used by Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing in the 1992 Francis Ford Coppola film, **BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA**.) Adding to the sense of wonder surrounding the presentation is the fact that Lee recorded his entire performance in one day, at a studio in the West End of London, while working on post-production dubbing for the motion picture **RASPUTIN, THE MAD MONK.**

Like many who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s, I first learned of this recording in the pages of the original *Castle of Frankenstein* magazine, which advertised it as part of their mail order inventory. (Needless to say, by the time the '70s rolled around, the price had increased considerably.) And like many others of the day, I had also heard of horror stories surrounding that magazine's difficulties in delivering the goods when it came time to fill those orders. To a kid whose primary source of income came from lawn-mowing money and cashing in pop bottles, sending away to Gothic Castle Publishing seemed like a risky investment...a sort of Russian Roulette. When the doors finally closed on the *Castle of Frankenstein*, the merchandise disappeared with the magazine. Or did it?

1998 marked the 10th anniversary of the publication of *Dracula* and- -as part of the centennial celebration- -Russ Jones, in conjunction with Chiller Theatre,



1975 Manor Books edition of THE ILLUSTRATED DRACULA. ©1966 by Russ Jones Productions



decided it was time to revive the Count. Going back to the master recordings of Christopher Lee's dramatization of **"Dracula,"** new transfers of the tapes to compact disc were made. Like its analog ancestor, this twin-CD reissue would also haunt the back pages of monster magazines. There had been little or no pre-publicity surrounding the event, so when I one day found the familiar face of Lee's Dracula staring and glaring up at me from a *Scary Monsters* mail order ad, I found myself experiencing *deja-vu*. After recovering from shock and seeing that this was a real ad, not a nostalgic reprint, I knew I *had* to have it! At long last, the morning came when I dropped that check in the mail. (It takes more yards and pop bottles these days.) Exactly one week later, I was tearing the shrink wrap off the CD before even leaving the post office parking lot.

I had been waiting a quarter of a century to hear this legendary recording. In spite of my impatience at the post office, on the way home I decided to wait a little longer and listen to **"Dracula"** after dark, stopping by the store to buy a couple of candles. Then late that night, by candlelight, I settled back to get a fearful earful as the dancing flames threw shivering shadows upon the walls. I was not disappointed. Christopher Lee's enthusiastic narration echoes the energy of a vintage Hammer film. And while it seemed odd not hearing Lee's voice backed by a James Bernard score, the bold, brassy background music and sound effects on the recording (courtesy of Cine Sound's Dennis Rogers and Elstree Studios) gave the production an atmospheric feeling reminiscent of classic radio thrillers. This special presentation is nicely padded with a number of bonus tracks, including an introduction and closing commentary by the original Cool Ghoul, Zacherle, as well as variations of the *Chiller Theatre* theme, and bloopers, outtakes and other unused material from the original Lee recording session (long locked away in the audio archives), all of which expand the original album's running time from 84 minutes to 116! The same care is also given to the packaging, with new cover art by Russ Jones (the original cover adorns the back of the box), and liner notes illustrated with a selection of photos taken on the set of **DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS.** Was it worth the wait? Absolutely! For fans of the Stoker novel, Hammer Films and/or Christopher Lee, this collectable addition to your listening library comes highly recommended.



Two other items of interest for audiophiles are Caedmon records 1975 production of *Dracula*, with the entire cast consisting of the duo of David McCallum and Carole Shelley (the recording was resurrected by Globe International in 1986, as part of the Globe Cassette Library); and the soundtrack album from **THE LEGEND OF THE 7 GOLDEN VAMPIRES**, as told by Peter Cushing, with a prologue by an unnamed narrator. While this last item was a rarity even upon its original release, it can now be enjoyed as part of the supplemental materials found on the Anchor Bay DVD edition of the film. So turn out the lights and turn up the volume. After all, what you can't *see* can't hurt you...



***An Eerie Epilogue:** Let me close with a creepy case of coincidence. The "Dracula" CD ended shortly after midnight, and I immediately sat down at the keyboard to hammer out the above review (in spite of the fact I had to be back up at 6:00 AM), hoping to contact publisher Dennis Druktenis the next day to see if he could use it. When I checked my e-mail that morning, there was a message from Dennis...asking if I would consider doing a review of the CD for an upcoming issue! Strange but true...and very scary...*

CASTLE of FRANKENSTEIN'S Back Issue Dept.

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